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Experiences within a parenting group and the transition into one's own family: A phenomenological study.

by

©

Joan Monson

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Education

in Counselling Psychology

Department of Educational Psychology

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 1988

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Experiences Within a Parenting Group and the Transition into One's Own Family: A Phenomenological Study" submitted by Joan Monson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Counselling Psychology.

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Date: July 15, 1988

DEDICATION

To Wally, Krista, Karen and Paul -- for being there.

ABSTRACT

Parent education groups have been on the rise, particularly in the past decade, as a method of improving parent/child relationships and assisting the child's positive growth. Many fields, such as Social Work and Education, are interested in promoting effective parenting. Leaders of such groups and those who train leaders are interested in the essential components of such groups and how to reach the participants. There are many approaches to such groups and studies have centered on quantitative studies in the area. The process occurring in parent education groups is analyzed in this phenomenological study, to answer questions regarding the experience for the group participant and the experience when she re-enters the family system; the context in which changes are to occur?

In an attempt to study the lived-experience, women participants in a daytime parent education group are interviewed. The program has an Adlerian base.

A phenomenological analysis is utilized to explore the lived-experience of 4 women, identify the essential constituents of the process, and gain understanding of how the process bridges between group and home. The experience suggests that families are contexually-based and there are reciprocal implications. Further, patterns of interacting are difficult to alter when one family member brings new information into the system. It therefore seems likely that if family interactional patterns, and skills which enable one person to enhance her impact on the system, are explicitly discussed by members of the parent education group, there may be a better prognosis for permanent change.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the assumptions behind conducting parent education programs is that group participants will hear information, discuss and clarify the concepts, and return home to apply the concepts to their children. Facilitators of parent education groups assume therefore that each family member is an independent decision-maker and that relationships within a family may be altered with additional outside information. The course intention is to impact the family beyond the participating member.

There are various viewpoints of family functioning and the potential for change within that system. In group parenting it is typical to have only one parent attending the course, generally the mother, however the father's role is also important for child development (Lamb, 1976; Gilbert, Hanson & Davis, 1982). Children form active and close relationships with their fathers even during the first two years of life (Kotelchuk, 1976); a period of time when mothers are often the primary caregivers.

Beavers (1977) writes that there are many family factors that affect children's development, such as degree of family organization, power issues, openness of family members, and degree of system flexibility. In systems theory it is acknowledged that living systems are dynamic and change is ongoing as the family matures. Such change may also create stress and strain on the system requiring an adaptation for the system to continue effective functioning. Individual desires or needs may compete and produce family conflict, and the ability to solve problems and conflicts between members makes a healthy, capable system (Beavers, 1977). It is therefore important for the family to have skills that will facilitate the negotiating process. If families of origin did not teach such skills, members may be unable to easily adapt to this need. Beavers (1977) states that in dysfunctional families there is ineffectual problem solving and Haley (1971) believes that the solution often creates a problem.

One issue for a successful parenting group therefore concerns family dynamics and process. Parental roles may need to be addressed within a group before permanent change is effected. Each participant comes to the group with an unknown historical background. How easy is it to overcome this history and do things differently? Are parenting practices altered through course content or processes?

Different approaches to parent education programs, based on varying theoretical perspectives, focus on different aspects of parenting (Pain, 1984). The present study focuses on the process occurring in one parent education program and explores the experience of mothers participating in two contexts -- the parenting group and the family system. It is intended to assist those working in the area to have a deeper understanding of the essential processes involved.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

In the last 20 to 25 years there has been an increasing demand for parenting programs (Pain, 1984). Much of the demand may have come from the studies indicating that there are certain parental competencies that enhance child development (Baumrind, 1970-71; Sears, Maccoby & Levin, 1976), although seldom are children's changing developmental needs included as part of published parent education programs. Robertson (1984) suggests that parenting education is on the rise today because of societal changes and the accompanying mobility of families with subsequent lack of extended family ties. Parents may now seek advice where before they relied on traditional family practices. After defining parent education, this review will examine underlying theoretical issues, parent education programs, family/gender issues, efficacy of mothers, and the issue of treatment as prevention versus therapy. Having acknowledged these influences, the review will outline the significance of phenomenological research in the study of parenting and the family, and restate the purpose of this thesis.

Parenting Education Definitions

Although "parent education" has existed since the 1800's, (Robertson, 1984) a consensual definition does not yet exist. Parenting ca[illegible]ean anything from education for parenthood (Earhart, 1980) to programs on human sexuality and nutrition (Authier, Sherrets & Tromontona, 1980). There have been various attempts to delimit a definition for parenting because it is so broad in scope. Lamb and Lamb (as cited in Dembo, Sweitzer & Lauritzen, 1985) suggest parent education is, "the formal attempt to increase the parent's awareness and facility with the skills of parenting." Croake and Glover (in Dembo et al., 1985) state that parenting is, "Purposive training activity of parents who are attempting to change their interaction with their child," and one further definition suggested by Fine (as cited in Dembo et al., 1985) is, "A systematically and conceptually-based program intended to impart information, awareness or skills to the participants on aspects of parenting" (p. 155). As noted from the above definition, Parent Education is "systematic," "formal" or "purposive" implying the existence of a curriculum, and typically consists of more than one meeting. There are differences however, in the number of meetings as well as the size of the group, which may range from one person to any number of participants. Parent education is defined herein as a formal program designed to change the behaviour of more than one family member. Parent training is often referred to in parenting literature, however, in this thesis parent training is more narrowly viewed as specific techniques taught to parents so they may accomplish particular goals.

Theoretical Issues

Scientific research deals with constructs, data, and analysis with the ultimate purpose of adding to our knowledge, in some way, about the subject of inquiry. Any legitimate researcher, being human, has beliefs, attitudes, and emotion, as well as overt action. Underlying research in the social sciences or the study of human beings are these, often unconscious, beliefs and attitudes toward human functioning. Four "root metaphors" (Rosnow & Georgoudi, 1986) provide a framework for an understanding of the study conducted herein, and each will be discussed with reference to its effect on parent education and knowledge of the family. The metaphors are used as an aid to understanding.

Organismic Root Metaphor

The first, and possibly oldest, root metaphor for understanding human action is from a biological tradition; an organismic view of man. Whitehead (1929) suggests this is a pre-Kantian view of human beings in the world. Each entity in the biological world is construed as essentially a process of self development or self creation, by selection and rearrangement of the material provided by its background. It, in turn, becomes material for the self-creations of the next generation (Whitehead, 1929). Each individual is viewed as functioning from within as a self-contained unit.

The view of change, within this metaphor, is that of a natural unfolding from within the subject, and the role of the environment is to block or not block the natural forces at work. The importance of family life is recognized and some authors, suggests Nicols (1987), believe that the forces of family life are internalized and intrapsychic personality dynamics become the dominant forces controlling behaviour. Freud is one personality theorist of this orientation, while Piaget's theory of development also presupposes a natural systematic progression. Alfred Adler, whose personality theory is a basis for the parenting program utilized with the participants of this study, believed that individuals are innately striving for perfection or superiority (Hergenhahn, 1984), although he also believed in a contextual view of development.

Psychological treatment method, for persons holding such a view of human action, is directed at the individual's internal psyche and personal make-up, according to Nicols (1987). On the other hand, General Systems theory applied to families, as espoused by Von Bertalanffy (Beavers, 1977), would seem to suggest that the family system has a life of its own and can be metaphorically viewed as "blind and powerless to resist" (Nicols, 1987, p. 6). Von Bertalanffy was a biologist and therefore his beliefs developed from an organic view of nature. It would appear that the view of the family system as something beyond the control of the individual members, would closely fit with Beaver's (1977) description of the dysfunctional family, one in need of help (p. viii). In his study of families, Beavers has placed dysfunctional families at one end of a continuum characterized by high entropy (tendency to go into disorder) closedness, undifferentiation, inflexibility and ineffectiveness. In contrast, functional families are characterized, in Beavers' (1977) work, as systems wherein there is a high level of adaptability, goal-achievement, openness, and low entropy (negentropic). These families too can be viewed as a holistic, organismic functioning unit, independent from individual members. Family treatment might then include all members of the total operating system with change directed towards the system.

In parent education too, an organismic foundation may be an unconscious belief held by the leader. In the parent education course used in this study, the theoretical foundation is Adlerian philosophy with its teleological view of human nature. In Individual Psychology, the organism is seen to strive in order to compensate for perceived weakness (Hergenhahn, 1984). Adler coined the term "inferiority complex" and viewed each individual as a subjective constructionist of reality (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). While Adler notes that man is a social being, he suggests that humans are internally motivated by a desire to belong and gain acceptance in the world. Human actions reflect this internal motivation. Thus past experience may unconsciously guide present behaviour and the key to personal change is to work with the individual to help the person overcome ineffective ways of interacting and faulty logic (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Common group parent education programs, such as Children the Challenge (Dreikurs, 1964) and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976) are both Adlerian-based and reflective of this underlying organismic metaphor.

Mechanistic Root Metaphor

A second root metaphor views man's behaviour as governed by universal laws with implied orderliness and stability (Rosnow & Georgoudi, 1986). Koch (1964) suggests that a mechanistic metaphor is generally expressed in terms of stimulus and response with central emphasis on individual learning which is believed to be observable and thereby objectively studied. Learning may be conceived of as predictable performance (McLeod, 1964). Behaviour is believed governed by deterministic and universal laws. Descartes, who is given credit for developing this view as a scientific philosophy (Flew, 1979) stated that he recognized, "... no matter in corporeal objects other than that susceptible of what the geometers call quantitative analysis" (p. 227). Descartes conceptualized an absolute division between the mental and the physical aspects of man. The mechanist holds that internal purposes have no place in scientific practice. For example, Hobbes (in Flew, 1979) indicates that all living things are natural machines. The person is steered but does little steering. Behaviour then is caused by something external, and causal truths are thought possible to find. Skinnerian theory could be said to view man in mechanistic terms, a theory that has been very popular in most psychological circles possibly because of its apparent conceptual simplicity.

A family system may be viewed as a machine having stable functioning, for the better or worse. Change becomes relearning and a change agent causes the machine to shift and restabilize. One part of the machine may change and there will be subsequent adjustment in all other parts. A parenting program having this metaphor as its guiding principle utilizes behavioural principles and teaches specific techniques to parents who may then apply these to their children to change behaviour. Becker's (1971) program is one based on this foundation. In the current study, the parenting course in which the co-researchers participated, presented specific reinforcement techniques to the group members, which is rather mechanistic, however the certainty of effect on the child was underplayed. That is; can lack of change be attributed to inconsistent application only? Can it also be attributed to the child as an independent decision-maker, or can non-success even be attributed to larger forces in the system?

Contextualist Root Metaphor

A third metaphor used as a foundation for human action is contextualism. It is believed by those who hold this view, that all human actions are embedded in a context of time, space, culture, and local tacit rules of conduct (Rosnow & Georgoudi, 1986). The context in which a person operates may be a positive or negative influence on development. Change and novelty are two of the fundamental propositions of this view, as people interact in their world, and thus psychological "truths" cannot be reduced to a decontextualized view of human behaviour. Change in one context, such as physical environment, or birth of another child, may demand change in the actors (Rosnow & Georgoudi, 1986). The process of becoming, does not hide "either some permanent mechanistic structures or some implicit organismic integration" (Rosnow & Georgoudi, 1986, p. 7). The authors go on to say that purposive action, rather than being an explicit organismic principle, as Adler might state, is situated interpersonally and emerges from interrelationships. When using contextualism as a root metaphor the emphasis is on the individual as an interbehavioural creative agent (Rosnow & Georgoudi, 1986).

Context then includes the macro level, such as political and social institutions, and the micro level for example, interpersonal exchange and communication (Rosnow & Georgoudi, 1986). The family may be viewed as occurring at both levels as it can be viewed as a social institution and a network of relationships. Minuchin (1974) describes the family as an interface between the individual and the social order.

It is beyond the scope of this study, to investigate macro level context, however it is important to recognize that political and social norms or pressures constrain and limit family unit as well as offer opportunities for change and growth. Furthermore, these norms and values are transmitted and translated within the family (Solomon, 1982) and research, much of it having to do with Schizophrenic "families," has investigated the structural aspects (translated from political and social norms of the society) and interaction processes (a within-family context) (Solomon, 1982). Beliefs of family members often reflect the views of the larger context and Beavers (1977) asserts that families function with differential effectiveness and hold different beliefs from their past social-historical and cultural milieu. For example, he states that "mid-range" families often believe that caring means controlling, and this internalized guiding ethic needs to be replaced with the idea that caring means providing for individual choice (Beavers, 1977). He also indicates that while, or possibly because, family contextual issues are ongoing, the family "is a cauldron of individual development" (p. xvii).

An individual's historical background makes an impact as to the expectations they bring into a new family unit. Power issues in the family of origin context will likely carry into the new family and will therefore, at least initially, affect the spousal relationship as well as parent-child relationships. Are power and control conferred on one individual or are they equally shared by the parents? Further, is there a parental coalition or does one child align with a parent thereby creating an intergenerational power alliance. Cultural background impacts the answers to these questions. As an example, in a study by Sinha (1985) it was found that although American mothers reported using their own authority and power for child compliance, Indian and Japanese mothers reported appealing on the basis of feelings and consequences. Others indicate that in United States culture, white, upper class mothers have less need to control, greater self-confidence, as well as greater interest and ability to play with children (Dembo et al., 1985). Moreover, in some cultures the family group may contain three generations, with grandparents being vital to the child raising process (Beavers, 1977). This type of family group, states Beavers, is more likely found in cultures wherein there is little geographic mobility, and custom and tradition play a large role, such as can be found in many rural communities.

Beavers (1977) asserts that in our culture, family competence is closely related to the encouragement of autonomous individuals, and that competent families have clearly differentiated and unique members who cooperate but who also act separately. In the parenting group under consideration, commonly accepted North American child development is stressed and parents are encouraged to develop autonomy in their children. There may be more appeal to such a group for families who hold the belief that child autonomy is desirable prior to group participation.

Contextual change requires a structural change within the operating family system. In family therapy, family members are not brought into sessions to provide additional information, but as participating clients, and change is viewed as a, "change in the sequences of behaviour within a group of intimates" (Haley, 1968, pp. 150-151). Within a contextual framework the family unit is complex indeed, as there is reciprocal impact on and by each functioning member, embedded in the social, historical, cultural context. Members' actions are thus interrelated and reciprocally influence one another (Mook, 1985).

As a result of the fact that contextualism, which can encompass the family, implies reciprocal determinism, and all general statements are viewed as relative to the current reality, it is difficult to translate family members' behaviours and experiences into the natural science method of inquiry, particularily when investigating how the family deals with information brought into the unit by one member. However, phenomenological analysis is primarily interested in how man lives as "embodied-subjectivity-in-his-world and in how he experiences himself and others in his interactions" (Mook, 1985, p. 3). With this view family action and interaction can be viewed as constituting a system of experienced meanings. A descriptive science could therefore illuminate the topic of inquiry.

While there is no one parenting course based on the metaphorical foundation of contextualism, the present program utilized with the co-researchers does address family of origin issues within the group, as well as assists participants to identify and deal with current life stresses in their social world. The larger context is thus introduced in the group.

Pattern Root Metaphor

A final root metaphor which aids in theoretical understanding, is the concept of pattern. This is a "new epistemology" for human interaction which is "oriented toward shapes, forms and relationships" (Mook, 1985, p. 2). Primarily reality is not the objects alone, but rather the connecting pattern. There are two levels of pattern; observable behaviours and patterns of meaning. The observable pattern is distinquishable as man or woman operates in a particular sequence. Such is the case where parent and child react the same way in their interactions with each other, through time. However, our actions are not meaningless but based on the meaning we attribute to a particular context (Laing, 1960). Each act is intentional and leads in its own direction to yield its own results. Although we can see the results, without knowing intentionality we are unable to interpret the behaviour. Laing (1960) goes on to explain that speech, communication, parenting, or any other observable human activity is the outcome of one's initial intentional act, and a person chooses the intentional act (behaviour) within the overall context of what one is after with the other to form a pattern of discourse (p. 22). If one person's intention is different from the other's, in a particular situation, there may be conflict and tension. Meaning therefore cannot be objective and universal but is based on one's intention or objective of consciousness (Giorgi, 1970). The external context does not automatically determine or alter the pattern. For example, if an individual has, for some time, addressed another as a superior, such as may be in a working relationship, an observable pattern of interaction develops, based on the meaning for each person. On the occasion the two occupy equal status, creating a different context, the pattern of interaction may or may not change. Because of the reciprocal implication of relationships, the view of change appears as one of feedback between those in a relationship to work out a new order. This may only be successful if all parties understand the interaction.

Family functioning also can be viewed as the process of complex reciprocal interactions and interlocking feedback mechanisms (Mook, 1985). In a family the "cycles of discourse and relationships represent motivated patterns that serve the psychic of everyone involved" (Nicols, 1987, p. 49). A pattern then can be viewed as concerning both the self in context and in action. Nicols (1987) uses the word praxis to describe the engagement of an active subject with his or her environment. People are not simply subject to particular processes, but also interact to alter process, creating a dynamic changing pattern. The individual and the environment interact to construct a pattern of interacting that is mutually determined, and in accordance with meaning. The multiplicity of interactions and influences occurring in the family context go beyond the dyadic level of mother-child, or father-child. "Each family member influences and is influenced by the behaviour of every other member and the children's behaviour reflects those multiple influences" (Anderson, 1980, p. 39). Like a kaleidoscope the pattern may adapt and be flexible or become fixed and unchanging even in the face of contextual differences, resulting in static dysfunctional interplay.

Families can be viewed as patterns of organization rather than specific wholes (Polkinghorne, 1983). The pattern or system is independent of the parts which make it up, yet each part influences and is influenced. Nicols (1987) suggests that systems do not change, rather people do, and that individuals experience themselves as "centers of initiative" (p. 38). People do engage in purposive action but they may not be conscious of the goal. It is difficult for universal laws to exist, as reality, is worked out in interaction with the self and with others. Causality therefore is of a circular, feedback nature, and is mainly concerned with the processes of communication within systems (Watzlawick & Weakland, 1977). We construct our experience in organized patterns of relationships and "the full significance can only be known by understanding the structural pattern in which it is a member" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 152). What is going on becomes the primary question as once the patterns of interaction are identified, change is possible. The family as a network of patterns can be related to the view of the family as a rule-governed system (Watzlawick & Weakland, 1977) and members behave according to unspoken governing principles which are particular to the specific family. These rules are important for day-to-day operations within a family and are therefore useful, however they may also create redundancy, state the above two authors, and the family will interact in repetitious sequences even to the detriment of effective functioning. Watzlawick & Weakland (1977) stress the fact that the rules cannot be separated from the relationship between two or more people; they are rules of interaction. In order for change to occur then, the rules of interaction need to alter.

In the parenting course which was utilized for this study, tools for communication were taught directly to participants, which if practised, facilitates opportunity to change interactional patterns, (see Appendix B). Thomas Gordon's (1970) communication techniques address relational issues in communication as well as provide tools for interacting beings.

Conclusion

The four root metaphors provide a basis for an understanding of human functioning. Each appears to be a different set of glasses and each lens alters the way a therapist or parent education facilitator approaches parents with whom s/he works. The first two metaphors, organismic and mechanistic, suggest a linear causality, the former internal and the latter external. That is, if one perceives an organismic reality then one will first attempt to locate the psychic cause and then change effect. If one views man as machine, environmental contingencies will be believed to produce change with parents as salient change agents.

The second two metaphors described herein, imply circular causality, with meaning as well as change reciprocally coconstituted, and no distinct starting point. They give an ecological perspective to human functioning. Change becomes a more complex issue as behaviours are maintained by complex factors and relationship issues become central for the interacting person.

In family literature and in parent education one of these four metaphors are often an unconscious belief system and the foregoing has attempted to place parent education programs within one of the four metaphoric understandings. This may not do complete justice to parent education programs as they may not be as distinct as implied herein, particularly for any one therapist. Moreover, therapists or group leaders may not have always made a conscious decision to wear a specific set of viewing lenses. However, the presuppositions inherent in a particular viewpoint does impact group process as well as course content.

Parent Course

The parent education program attended by the four co-researchers has parts of all four root metaphors. Because it is essentially Adlerian (organismic), behaviour is viewed as purposeful and goal-oriented and the social pull of beings taught to participants. Child development, arising from internal structures, is also directly taught.

Tools of reinforcement are taught to participants for possible use in the home to train children for "appropriate" behavior (mechanistic). However, as the participants are encouraged to discuss home situations, the context and family patterns of discourse are brought into the group and made explicit. Early contextual issues as occurring in the participants' family of origin are also raised in the group and examined for implications in present parenting.

Further, communication tools are taught to participants which, if practised in the home, may alter past patterned responses of the parent, impacting meaning for the child. "Private logic" (patterned meaning) is stressed, and there is an overt emphasis on assisting the parent to understand her child's point of view as valid for the child, however different from the parent's, and then to search for acceptable solutions to differences. Family rules of interaction thereby may become increasingly explicit and into awareness of the practising parent. The spousal relationship is not directly raised in the group as presently circumscribed, however the concepts of the program could be applicable beyond the parent/child relationship.

The leader/facilitator of the group interacts with participants and interprets course content to determine the actual nature of a group. The leader's epistemology may change the actual experience in the group as well as what the participants learn while attending.

In general, the parent education course utilized with the co-researchers, implies the notion of circular causality and family patterns develop through interacting with others, past and present interactions included. The primacy of relationships is emphasized, yet the focus is on the parent-child relationship (see Appendix B).

Parent Education Programs

As a result of the increased demand for parent education a variety of programs have been developed. Some of these are preventative, while others are more therapeutic in orientation (Pain, 1984). This distinction is further discussed in a later section. Moreover, some programs are designed for use with specific groups, such as parents of handicapped children, abusive parents, or parents of children with an attention deficit (Pain, 1984). However, it is not often programs are adapted to meet specific needs (Robertson, 1984). There are generally three types of parent education program categories; behavioural, communication-oriented and Alderian. Each of these will be discussed regarding content before research into the three types is reviewed.

Behavioural

The behavioural approach to parenting is based on the principles of experimental psychology (Pain, 1984), and is based on a mechanistic reality. One such program is Becker's Parents Are Teachers (1971), while another, Patterson's Living With Children (1971), is based on the principles of social learning. Patterson's programs have been used most extensively with parents of aggressive children (Pain, 1984), as his clinical research career has been devoted to this area. One of Patterson's interesting findings, is that a parent's irritable aggression serves to escalate the child's aggressive behaviour (Patterson, as cited in Wells, 1984). These programs teach parents how to use the reinforcing or punishing qualities of antecedent stimuli to modify behaviours of their children (Pain, 1984). The focus is on observable, measurable behaviours and not on interactions or feelings. The basic skills taught include positive reinforcement, time-out, response cost and overcorrection. A study which assessed the skills preferences of participants in such a group, found that positive reinforcement was the most preferred skill (Jensen, 1985). Time-out was second, and ignoring inappropriate behaviours was rated the third highest (Jensen, 1985). In these programs the parent holds the control, identifies the undesirable behaviour, finds the baseline, and then actively applies techniques to change the behaviour, reflecting the mechanistic metaphor. Generally there is a precise and organized structure with detailed homework.

There is a proliferation of research based on the behavioural approach precisely because it lends itself to experimental research. Dembo et al., (1985) evaluated a number of studies based on a behavioural model of parent education. Their analysis was comprehensive as far as giving an overview of the studies using this model and relaying results in terms of overall positive or negative effect. They evaluated 15 behaviourally-based groups and found that all reported some positive effect. However, the investigators of studies did not specify or identify which components were responsible for the change in the child or which components are necessary (Dembo et al., 1985). Generally, observed child behaviours are measured before and after an education program. The criteria for program success reflects the foundation of the philosophical base; observable behavioural changes in children. Most of the research on behavioural groups is conducted with parents whose children are demonstrating behavioural problems such as aggression or attention deficit and the alleviation of these child behaviours is taken as evidence of success (Levinger, 1979). One such study was conducted by Patterson, Chamberlain and Reid (1982). The parents in the study had children who had been referred to a clinic for social aggression. Only children with observable high rates of aggression were included. There were 19 subjects in the experiment; 10 in the experimental condition and 9 in the control condition. There was some non-equivalency of groups in that the control group had a significantly lower monthly income than the experimental group. The parents in the control group were treated by a mixed approach at various professional agencies, while the parents in the experimental group were seen on an individual basis for an average of 17 hours each. Three different measures were used; family observation, observation of aversive behaviour and a problem behaviour checklist. The "parent training" group showed a 63% reduction in the mean rate of child deviant behaviour from the baseline, and the treated control group showed a 17% reduction from the baseline score leading the researchers to conclude that the parent training was superior to other treatment in the community. However this is a questionable conclusion as there are a number of methodological problems illustrated. Foremost is the difficulty comparing treatments with differential amounts of time. The researchers state that the experimental group average was 17 hours while the control group average was 17.75 sessions which may not compare well. Furthermore, because of the wide variation in treatment methods for the control group it is difficult to attribute the differences between groups to the behavioural base of the experimental group. The authors explain that most of the changes noted for the comparison group were produced by 2 therapists who used parent-training techniques such as time-out. Moreover, the measures used are consistent with behaviourally-based experimentation and result naturally from this base. Change is narrowly defined. Additionally, there was no untreated control to measure the effects from simply being given the pre/post tests, as well as the fact these children were in the top 10% of socially aggressive children referred, and may have naturally regressed toward the mean. Small sample size was also a problem within this experimental design.

Behavioural studies generally conclude that the socio-economic status of parents is an important characteristic affecting results with less favorable outcomes from those parents of lower income (Rose, 1974; Patterson, 1974 as cited in Dembo et al., 1985) such as was the case for the Patterson et al. (1982) study. Their study is reported as an example of the studies typically conducted and methodological problems common to the research in general.

When researchers have assessed the measures used in studies to date, such as independent observer ratings, parent attribute questionnaires and parent recorded observations, it has been found that the parent attitude questionnaires generally yield less favorable results (Dembo et al., 1985). Further, when group training versus individual in vivo training has been studied, it has been found that in vivo training is a superior method of alleviating undesirable behaviours (Eyberg & Matarazzo, 1980), although parents may feel more uncomfortable and possibly drop out of the program (Forehand, Middlebrook, Rogers, & Steffe, 1983). In terms of overall satisfaction, mothers who received individual parent-child interaction training, in the Eyberg and Matarazzo (1980) study, were significantly more satisfied with the treatment that they received than those in didactic group training. The individual training may have increased the opportunity to address specific issues in a particular family, and it follows that there is increased opportunity to meet a parent's needs of the moment. A group format necessarily requires more generality. While the individual training may be beneficial for alleviating immediate deviant child behaviours, it may also create a dependency upon the "expert" to assist with problems rather than peer support. As the child develops and new concerns arise, will the parent need to return for more help? Parent training using a behavioural model has been researched with parents who have a child with Attention Deficit Disorder (Barkley, 1986), treatment of child abuse and neglect (Brunk, Henggeler & Whelen, 1987) conduct disorders (Dadds, Swartz & Sanders, 1987) as well as general problem disorders (Adesso & Lipson, 1981) and found to make some positive behavioural changes, but studies are plagued by methodological problems such as low sample size and treatment maintenance.

Communication-Based

The second category which offers a particular approach to parent education is a communication model wherein the verbal interactions between parent/child are the focus. It appears to focus on context-specific patterns of interaction and less on a mechanistic approach. These types of programs, such as Parent Effectiveness Training (P.E.T.)(Gordon, 1970), teaches parents non-directive counselling techniques such as Active Listening, I Messages and Problem Solving. After a perusal of the bibliography appearing at the end of Gordon's book, the approach appears to be humanistic. Humanistic psychology maintains that "Choice, Creativity, and self-realization, rather than mechanistic reductionism are the concern ...." (Hergenhahn, 1984 p. 317). It is based upon a subjective rather than objective orientation to reality. In order to teach P.E.T., leaders must have taken a specific course, thereby standardizing the program. Virginia Satir's Peoplemaking (1972) is a book that is used as a base for a parenting course and is founded also on a communication model, stressing the importance of verbal interactional patterns. A study by Jensen (1985) found the most preferred skill in communication-based groups was negotiation, while "I" messages and goal-setting were also viewed as important by the participants. Part of the emphasis in Gordon's (1970) program is on conflict resolution based on mutual respect and acceptance between parent and child. Gordon, in his book Parent Effectiveness Training (1970), explains in several chapters why parental control over the child is not effective and that parental authority ought to include "nonpower methods of influence" (p. 193). His philosophy appears in direct opposition to the behavioural methods previously discussed as behavioural methods suggest parental control over the child. His program also includes parental discussion of beliefs and values in order to clarify the influence of beliefs in parenting..

Parent Effectiveness Training (1970) is by far the most commonly investigated program offering this approach. The assessment of program effectiveness is focused primarily on the parent's child rearing attitudes, not on behaviour, which is, of course, reflective of the underlying philosophy. Most of the research in this area deals with parents of children without identified problems and it is typically group oriented, although Gordon, a clinical psychologist, developed his course in 1962 for parents of the children he was seeing in therapy (Levinger, 1979) as a way of giving psychology away to these parents to incorporate into practice.

Two early studies by Shapiro and Hereford and reported by Levinger (1979), indicated there was a significant change in child-rearing attitudes and there was more change for those who attended at least four group meetings. The Hereford study also included teacher ratings and a socio-metric measure of peer relationships in the classroom. While there was significant positive change on the sociometric measure, teacher ratings did not show any change from pre to post test. The Hereford study included over 775 families which sets it apart from most other quantitative research in an area known for small sample sizes. That study was still unable to answer what happens in the group or family to account for change. Dembo et al., (1985) analyzed 18 studies of Parent Effectiveness Training. In all studies the measurement of change was parental attitudes, some children's self-concept inventories and several checklists. There were few cases where independent observer ratings of children's behaviour were utilized, as there had been in the behavioural studies. While there was one case where the indicated results were negative, in most cases there were mixed results with positive change on some measures but not others. Generally the criteria for success reflected the philosophy of the program, however, Friedman (1969), as cited in Abidin (1980) correlated parent's attitudes as indicated on the Hereford Parent Attitude Survey (1963) with children's social behaviour as assessed by raters, and found that of six measures only child leadership correlated significantly with level of parental trust (p. 135). Abidin (1980) then stated that the lack of correspondence between observed behaviour change and parent attitude creates doubt on the utility of reflective counselling for parents. There also have been studies that found positive behavioural change in the children of parents who participated in such a group (Abidin, 1980), however these changes seemed most particular to school issues. If the philosophy behind communication-based groups does not focus on overt behaviour, and stresses to parents decreased control over the child, possibly the lack of immediate behaviour change in the child is not significant for the program planners, even though it may very well be important for the participating parent. This may create a descrepancy between parent and leader definitions of success. Just as with the behaviourally-based groups, most studies have methodological difficulties, such as small sample sizes, lack of control groups and lack of randomized samples. Thomas Gordon (as cited in Dembo et al., 1985) states that all studies done with his P.E.T. indicated changes that were statistically significant, however the authors of the article suggest that unless methodological difficulties are addressed and solved, significant differences are not convincing. Once again, methodological difficulties prevent generalizations. In addition, consensus as to the criteria for success is dependent upon the approach and not upon an integrated view of the family. It is also impossible to state the process occurring in the group or the family.

Adlerian

The third large category type for parent education is an Adlerian approach. Adler's philosophy has been translated into a parenting program by several individuals, Rudolf Dreikurs (1964) likely being the best known with his book Children the Challenge (1964). This approach stresses the importance of the family group for belonging as well as sense of competency. Because of its teleological roots in Adlerian philosophy, the purpose of behaviour is emphasized (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). The purpose or goal is said to influence the behaviour of the interactive child. Also stressed to parents is the idea of "private logic" and understanding of behaviour is essential. As with Thomas Gordon's approach, parental beliefs and attitudes are generally examined. Misbehaviour is seen as a result of mistaken goals on the part of the child and the parent's role is to correct these mistakes. There is then a responsibility on the parent/participant to identify the mistaken belief and then act to alter this belief. Behaviour change follows change in belief about oneself. This is quite different than identifying overt deviant behaviour and systematically eliminating it. In courses of this orientation emphasis is also placed on encouragement of the child, promotion of feelings of self-worth and the communication of love, support and confidence in the child's capabilities (Pain, 1984). Another programmed course based on Adlerian principles is Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) (Dinkmeyer & McKay, 1976). While the course is similar in foundation to Children the Challenge, communication skills are also stressed and parents are taught reflective listening and "I" Messages, problem ownership, and problem solving which Children the Challenge does not emphasize. Studies focusing on this approach seem to appear most often in school guidance and counselling literature and little emphasis is on severe behaviour problems as it is believed all misbehaviour has the same roots -- discouragement and mistaken goals. In fact, the programs of this type emphasize an educational approach, not clinical.

Dembo et al. (1985) analyzed 10 parent education programs that have been published using an Adlerian base. One of the difficulties in these, as with other studies aforementioned, is that some studies used one program, while others used another and none are able to specify which components in the course was the impetus for change. (Actually, research into communication-based group is the most comparable because almost all studies concentrated on P.E.T. which is a standardized program). Generally, Alderian-based group research indicates positive change in parental attitudes however there has been little research which included rater observation of child behaviour. Studies, typically use instruments such as parental attitudes (Dembo et al., 1985).

Sharon Robertson (1976) used an Adlerian-base for her study, Parent Education: The Dreikurs Model. She did use rater observation in addition to parent report and interviewing and found that it was very difficult to obtain interrater agreement, and in addition, different raters interpret the scales differently. Her post-test only investigation, found that the participants in the experimental group differed in their attitudes toward maturity demands and communication from non-participants in that the experimental group had a more heterogeneous variance than the control group in terms of expressed practices. The difference between means of the groups, however were non-significant. Robertson concludes that her design could have been improved by using a pre-test measure to clarify whether there are actually significant changes on these dimensions.

One other study published by Alberta Education (Pain, 1984), indicated positive changes in attitudes as well as positive change in behaviour as measured by a behaviour checklist. One of the more interesting findings in this study, conducted with parents of kindergarten children, is that after taking the course, parents saw less descrepancy been their actual and ideal parent behaviours. What is not known is whether parental behaviour changed or whether they simply accepted themselves more as parents. Regardless of where change occurred, their "parenting self-concept" did rise, which indicated a higher level of satisfaction in the parenting role (Pain, 1984, p. 56). In this course there was both group participation as well as individual consultation with each parent, necessitating a high level of time commitment from the leader, and therefore a high course cost. No known Adlerian studies used a clinic population for course participation, but rather depended on volunteers from the general community, quite different from research utilizing the behavioural approach. The course attended by the co-researchers in this study was similar to that used in the Pain (1984) study, however the participants were not seen for individual consultation.

Several studies have compared approaches to each other (Pinsker & Geoffrey, 1981; Frazier & Matthes, 1975; Schofield, 1979) with inconclusive results. Because of methodological problems, particularly problems with small group sizes and lack of consistent, well-validated instruments, it is very difficult to generalize results to any population. In most comparison studies there were so many intervening variables, such as leader differences, socio-economic differences, varying ages of children and severity of parent/child problems, it is extremely difficult to even attribute positive change to a program.

Overall Summary of Parenting Program Research

The methods of research to date have not been able to satisfy program planners that programs actually work (Clarke-Stewart, 1981).

After a comprehensive analysis of selected studies, Dembo et al. (1985) state,

> Unfortunately there are not enough well designed studies to draw definite conclusions and implications about the general effectiveness of parent education or whether any type of program is more beneficial for a certain type of family or person ..... A multidisciplinary approach using knowledge from allied fields, i.e., parenting, family sociology, life span development, would contribute greatly to improvements in the quality of the research. (p. 183)

Although research cannot quantify parent education to be totally effective at this time, and it is not possible to state what happens in the group from the existing research, most studies do indicate that parents participating felt they had benefited from the group (Pain, 1982; Robertson, 1976). Whether this benefit translates to the children on a long-term basis is yet to be definitively known.

Family/Gender Issues

In the attempt to understand the relationship between parents and children, many writers and researchers have chosen to analyze the relationship between the infant and mother as a starting point (Abidin, 1980). It is apparent that there is a strong biological bond before the birth process, and nursing the infant reinforces this fact. Researchers have often started their studies at this point (Bowlby, 1969) and attempts then made to study differing effects of more or less maternal bonding. Estrada, Arsenio, Hess and Holloway (1987) for example, found that an effective mother-child relationship influences cognitive growth. Often the father is not included in studies as they generally are not as involved in the day to day caring and responsibilities with young children, in most cases. Lamb (1981) has more recently studied father-child interaction and found that fathers increase their relative salience in the lives of their sons as their sons develop, through increasing interaction, while they also influence their daughters with a predictable effect. This effect is different from mother effects. Investigators have also found that fathers are very important for the child's socialization (Gilbert, Hanson, & Davis, 1982) although current knowledge of paternal influences is still relatively primitive and deficient (Lamb & Frodi, 1980). Gilbert et al. (1982) found that the father, more than the mother, is likely to place stereotypic restrictions regarding how boys and girls ought to behave and therefore their beliefs may also need addressing in parenting groups where often the focus is on the mother-child relationship as she is the family member most often attending. Studies (Martin, 1977; Firestone, 1980) have found, however, that the mother-child relationship improved with individual parenting sessions whether or not the father was included. Whether this change will be maintained after the group is discontinued is difficult to surmise. The intent of parent education is long-term change and this has not been well researched to see if, while there may be initial change in the mother-child relationship, after the intervention ends the family returns to its pre-course stability.

The quality of the marital relationship may influence the way both parents behave toward their children (Pederson, Anderson & Cain, 1976, as cited in Abidin, 1980) and also may influence treatment effect (Dadds, Schwartz & Sanders, 1987), yet the marital relationship is seldom considered in parenting groups. In clinic-referred populations there typically is a relationship between marital distress and child behaviour problems, although this has not always been a consistent finding (Privy, Myers, Holden, Tarnowski, & Roberts, 1983). It may be that parent perceptions of children's behaviours are affected by the quality of spousal support and that, "traditional parent training programs incompletely serve families" by failing to address marital issues (Griest & Wells, 1983). They suggest that our knowledge of family variables affecting treatment is not well known.

Sexism, or sex-role stereotyping, also affects power issues within a family unit as they are a basis for differentiation of activities (Maccoby, 1966 as cited in Garbarino, 1982). Mothers may have a narrow range of competence or there can be a "separate but equal" approach to family development. In functional families, according to Beavers, there is little role stereotyping and the overt power of male and female parents is relatively equal (Beavers, 1977, p. 201). He suggests that no two people can be intimate without possessing relatively equal power. Issues, such as who makes family decisions, how problems are solved and who is the ultimate authority, is an important dimension when assessing the potential for permanent change in the quality of relationships within the family and overt behaviour patterns. From a man's perspective too, "the liberation of each man from power complexes begins as a personal liberation" (Solomon, 1982, p. 30). Power and control issues may function as a myth for one member of a family that may or may not be a shared view. Each person may have an internalized expectation of the other, developed from early observed or idealized experiences in the family of origin and comes with two people into the marriage to influence responses and interactions (Nicols, 1987). The study undertaken herein had all female co-researchers, and the entry of new ideas into the family system may be somewhat dependent on the openness and support of their family unit to new information from this member of the family. Garbarino (1982) writes that formal and informal support systems figure prominently in "the very creation of a meaningfulness of human experience" (p. 56). This support system may serve to open a person to new experiences or limit their adaptation. If a parenting group is to be the catalyst for permanent child behaviour change, the participating parent must re-enter the family system with her new beliefs or techniques and the system flexible enough to accept the new ideas, or at least permit members to discuss how the beliefs, attitudes and skills can be altered for a particular family. From this viewpoint, unless the father's role is included in the group process, success is unlikely as the father may sabotage any constructive changes that mother and child make. Brody and Forehand (1985) found that the parenting group may provide an opportunity for increased marital satisfaction. This may depend on the overt and covert power within the family. Beavers (1977) states that in effective families, role stereotyping is minimal and men gentle, women capable, without threatening the stability of the system (p. 201). If the woman in the family sees herself as inferior, it may be difficult to effect permanent family change through a parenting group.

Brunk, Menggeler, and Whelan (1987) studied group parent training based on a "mechanistic paradigm" versus a program with individual families intended to "change interactional patterns." This was a rather well-designed study with observational measures as well as self-reported measures. In addition, there was random assignment to either group. It was found that families who received "parent training" (mechanistic) had a significant decrease in social system problems, while parents who received multisystemic treatment (interactional patterns) reported a greater decrease in family problems. A control group, receiving no treatment, was not included in this study. If a decrease in family problems leads to more functional family, then it is possible these results may persist.

Summary of Family/Gender Issues

Issues within a group may reflect the issues of the social system in general. To what extent can the woman autonomously choose direction if the man is in charge? Moreover, the same people who are most affected by gender/power issues in the home may also be most affected by the gender of the group leader, which will, in turn, affect their willingness to put into practice ideas discussed in the group.

Ultimately, it is the family who must choose the practices within its boundaries and therefore issues affecting the family also affect its ability to change when new information, whether in the form of behavioural successes, or attitudes and beliefs, is presented or demonstrated.

Efficacy of Mothers

There has been a substantial amount of research designed to "prove" the effectiveness of one type of parenting program. None of the studies examined has been able to indicate a consistent model for parent education, despite the fact that persons taking such courses appear to enjoy them. The many programs have differing philosophical beliefs and work with different populations. One of the difficulties with past research is to show that changes happening during or immediately after the course maintain themselves over time. Very few of the studies have been longitudinal, however there have been several exceptions. Baum and Forehand (1981) examined 34 subjects who had taken a parent training course one to four and a half years earlier. They found that child behaviour change and parent perceptions of change were maintained at follow-up. In addition, some behaviour change in parents was also maintained and parents reported a high level of satisfaction with the program. Other studies investigating long-term maintenance of treatment have either been looking at effects one year after treatment, or have found that treatment effects have not been maintained (Wahler, as cited in Baum & Forehand, 1981). Pain (1984) found, in her study utilizing an Adlerian approach, that treatment effects remained after four months. It may be that behavioural change as well as perceptual change assists long-term maintenance of effects. The optimum expectation for program planners and policy makers is, of course, that changes will be maintained for the duration of the time the child is living with his/her family.

Moreover, in former research it has remained problematic to attribute changes to particular content and not to incidental factors such as leader personality, group support or normal developmental factors. Clarke-Stewart (1981) concludes that curriculum content is important, but that it is related to outcomes and has not been researched using designs specifically for that purpose. Studies to date are significant and demonstrate the complexity involved obtaining valid results. A parenting group, like a therapy group, is meant to assist the individual as well as the family in its effectiveness and ability to function. Perceived feelings of competency may be at least as important as outsider ratings of competency. The way parents perceive their children affects both how parents and children interact, and how children behave. Parents may evaluate their children's behaviour against a set of attitudes, expectations, beliefs and standards from past experiences (Griest & Wells, 1983). Furthermore, effectiveness in the group may generally raise the participant's level of perceived competency and empower her in all areas of life.

Efficacy expectations are presumed to have influence by enhancing intensity and persistence of effort (Bandura, 1977) and program planners do want people to persist in a course. Although much more research is required, particularly with efficacy expectations arising from verbal persuasion, as in many discussion groups, Bandura postulates that perceived self-efficacy may intervene to affect both behaviour and attitude. This suggests that internal experiences, not easily measurable, have large impact on choices made regarding how to behave. Meaning does affect actions in the world and it then becomes important to understand how a parent is interpreting the information gained in the group. Others have noted that parents who are prone to maltreat their children often "perceive themselves as impotent in the face of forces both internal and external to the family" (Garbarino, 1977). It would then follow that a person's beliefs regarding her ability to produce change would impact actual change. In research also, it becomes important to understand meaning for the participant (subject) and how the program affects perceptions of self efficacy. Does having an "expert" state techniques, or even help the subject implement techniques, strip the subject of confidence in her own resources? Moreover, is the intention of the subject to learn child-rearing techniques or to comply with outside authority. Perceived competency is then indeed powerful and all types of parent groups must work to insure the participant understands she has impact with her children as well as in the family. The subjective view becomes very important for permanency of change and research needs to investigate the subject's world.

Prevention Versus Therapy

One further issue begging to be addressed is the question of whether parent education is a therapeutic intervention or whether it is at the level of prevention. Are parenting groups therapeutic? The connotation of prevention in the mental health field is that the problems raised are less critical, if any problems are present at all, while therapeutic intervention is a concerted effort to alleviate problems that are creating intense distress for those involved. Yet it can be difficult to separate the two as the same problem may be more or less critical for different families. Further, in some cases, it is not the family that sees a problem but others in the community. In one home the parent may easily cope with developmental concerns of the child, while in another these concerns may create distress for a parent. Furthermore, a problem may be defined by the person seeking treatment. If a person seeks out treatment to assist with a child who bites, is that prevention (of future aggressive acts) or therapeutic intervention? Intervention implies that change is desired and will take place, the same goal as prevention in parenting groups. Group parent education is a non-intrusive family intervention. Guerney and Guerney (1981) suggest that all family life educationalists are also interventionists.

Levinger (1979) indicates that groups which aim to prevent future problems through teaching behaviour management, reflective listening, or other techniques could be considered educational, while groups which aim for the remediation of present problems could be seen as therapeutic. Parent education has been used for both (Gordon, 1975; Adesso & Lipson, 1981; Barkley, 1986; Brunk et al., 1987).

The issue is not a small one because it impacts group dynamics as well as necessary leader qualifications. In a therapeutic setting the leader establishes a different more personal, in-depth relationship (Dembo, et al., 1985). Yet, if some groups induce in the parent feelings of powerlessness and dependence on the professional as Hess (1980) suggests, then family change is not likely to occur. Most professional therapists understand the need to empower clients and use their skills to do so.

In therapy, it is important to develop rapport and empathy with clients, assisting them to express themselves as wholly, and with as much support, as possible. On the other hand, in an educational approach there is more distance and focus on content to be imparted to learners. Rapport, while helpful, is not of essence in an educational approach, as long as learners gain the knowledge determined by the educator. In research also, the method may reflect a personal, empathetic relationship, or a more distant one such as thought possible by a natural science method. The phenomenological method, however, requires rapport and empathy between researchers and researched, if the experience is to be understood and described as fully as possible. Sustained presence is essential to both the research and therapy. The phenomenological method thereby closes the gap between scientific endeavour and practice.

The studies analyzed using the behavioural approach used Masters or Ph.D. level leaders, while all of the P.E.T. leaders were trained as required by the Parent Effectiveness Training organization. No information was available on any other qualifications those leaders may have had. The Adlerian-based groups, although focusing their teaching on internal processes in children and parents, as well as overt behaviour, used the least-trained leaders. This may account for some of the lack of positive results, although leadership has not been systematically studied (Robertson, 1985).

Whether parents are in therapy or training has been investigated by Lamb and Lamb (1978) who say:

> the goals of therapy and training are similar and overlap ... but there is a distinction between them .... Therapy typically focuses on the affective domain, while education and training both work with the cognitive. Therapy usually implies an existing internalized problem; training does not (as cited in Levinger, 1979).

Yet, in most cases wherein the parent is undergoing a specific, critical issue, as is most likely to occur with parents attending a clinical setting, the most common parenting program appears to be a behaviourally-based group with its mechanistic foundation. From analyzing these studies, there is no indication that the leaders attend to parental emotional concerns. Parents are trained as therapists for their children with little, or no regard for the family dynamics, or the personal issues of the parent that they bring into parenting.

Conclusion

In general, the studies into parent education have varying philosophical roots. Programs which may adopt a combination of methods likely exist but do not seem to have attracted research into their effectiveness. The studies analyzed herein have not been able to provide conclusive evidence as to what actually is the impetus for change when it does occur. Questions remain as to whether it is the content, the group process, leader competencies or other unidentified factors that provide the catalyst. It is not known why programs work or what it is that works. Moreover, there is a common criticism (Dembo, et al., 1985; Robertson, 1984) that most studies in the area, utilizing a natural science approach, use inadequate measurements and instruments. It is difficult, when providing a course to one person, to measure the impact on other persons, and children are no exception. While most participants express enjoyment of courses, unless there is change in the family, the results cannot be used to widen the scope of funding or participation. Of all studies analyzed only those in the communication-based, P.E.T., are actually directly comparable in that all persons were similarly trained and each program is consistent. In the behavioural-based and Adlerian studies there is diverse program curricula and leader competencies. Each group may therefore vary, and does not lead us closer to verification of positive results.

Moreover, it can be argued that the whole area of parent education is not well defined and there is a need to develop a theoretical model incorporating its interdisciplinary interest base, that includes research and literature in life span and family development (Robertson, 1984). There is a need to clarify the specific necessary and positive components of parenting itself, as well. Fundamental issues still need addressing.

Further, research studies to date do not give definitive answers as to the most effective transmission of parenting practices and few deal explicitly with the belief systems of parents. Should parents control children? Are children to be manipulated to conform? Do children want to belong? Is there room within groups for individual beliefs or is the expectation that everyone ought to agree with a particular approach?

Moreover, the question of who should "teach" parenting has not been resolved. Is it important for the leader to have specific counselling skills or is membership in parenthood sufficient? Nor has the interaction of particular leaders with specific clients been evaluated.

Although the literature does investigate overall effectiveness of programs, there is little examination of process -- the ongoing process of being in a group. Are parental feelings of competency enhanced in the group? Is the effect of parent education to make the parent more dependent and unsure or does it empower the course participant? High drop-out rates (Levinger, 1979; Forehand, Middlebrook, Rogers, &

Steffe, 1983) suggest that although parent education is seen as valuable by many professionals, there are many parents attending such courses whose needs are not met by the course; either in the group or when they take it into their family system.

Some of the current literature is beginning to address family issues within the group. This intuitively makes sense as change ultimately occurs in the family system. Yet, examined literature to date does not lay an experiential foundation of what occurs for participants between home and group. The examination of current parent education research has revealed an exclusive natural science view, with inconclusive findings in the area. While some studies have focussed on a criteria of behavioural change in children, others have used attitude change or parent reports, and all ignore some aspects of the experience, yet studies attempt to prove the "success" of one approach. The natural science approach has not given encompassing generalizations, rather they are domain specific. A parent attending a group is dealing with many confounding factors, her upbringing, her husband's upbringing, the family's past interactional patterns and the concepts presented in the group. How she interprets the experience of the group is possibly dependent on these as well as other, unidentified factors. The reasons for the equivocal findings may possibly be a result of the inability of researchers using a natural science approach to consider these factors in their analysis. A family interacts within a specific cultural, social, economic and historical context which is not considered in outcome studies. Change is not simple, and family patterns of behaviour are reciprocally determined, not simply passed from parent to child. Parents and children coconstitute the family. Therefore lasting change is not caused by a simple behaviour change on the part of the parent. Behaviour is an "intentional act" (Laing, 1960, p. 22) and meanings in consciousness become important if change is to be permanent. The lived-experience of group participants includes the process of understanding; a match of intentions among all those affecting and being affected, and the meaning of the process for all impacted. To date this has not been addressed. The current study is intending to fill many of the existing gaps and give a different perspective of the issues that will compliment natural science research. It is analysis within the context of discovery and is an equally valid method to that of justification. In a descriptive science, it is the description itself that is the source of knowledge, and the aim is to be as exhaustive as possible with respect to the given and to learn from it (Giorgi, 1986). The questions being examined herein, all have discoverable answers but there is no a priori way of knowing the answers. This thesis specifically describes the experience of being in a parent education group to answer the questions:

1. What does it mean to experience a parenting group?
2. What happens in the family as a result of such experience?
3. What processes are identified by the group participant as helpful for the family?

CHAPTER 2: FOUNDATIONS OF METHOD

Introduction

When choosing a research method, it is important to use an approach which is most suited to answer the research question. The present study is a phenomenological study because within this human science method is the opportunity to understand the embedded, holistic nature of families, and how new information, presented to one member, is integrated. Before commencing the analysis of the phenomenon, it is necessary to outline the reasons for the particular method chosen; its underlying philosophy and suppositions, and to place phenomenological research within the context of scientific methodology. This chapter examines the philosophical foundation, the scientific premises, and stipulates reasons why phenomenology is an appropriate method for this study.

Human Science

Human science and natural science methodologies are based on differing world views. The human science movement is a departure from the natural scientific premise that it is possible to reach a scientifically objective reality when the subject matter is the human person. Cartesian duality or mind-body dualism is rejected and man is characterized as a holistic being, whose actions and behavior are the result of an interplay with the self-in-the-world. "Human experience does not take place in a vacuum but is formed in and integrated into the psychophysical existence of persons" (Dilthey, as cited in Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 285). The lived-world experience becomes central to research in human science as it is these experiences that lead us to fully understand humans -- the subject of inquiry.

In the natural sciences it is believed man can be viewed and view objectively, rendering the contents of consciousness unnecessary for study. In human science the contents of consciousness are viewed as an integral part of the functioning whole and of essential importance for the study of persons. Valle and King (1978) explain that we co-constitute our world, meaning that a person has no existence apart from her world, and therefore all human behavior is contextualized. Meaning emerges through this interaction of being-in-the-world. This method therefore supposes the researcher cannot take man out of his world and still study the complete human experience. Beavers (1977) tells us that man is rooted in his family, social and symbolic reality and his innate symbolism makes him a part of all mankind. The practices in which we engage are not reducible to individual subjective experiences but are collectively created over time and actually constitute human experience (Salner, 1986) and by understanding experience we gain understanding of the practices. There is a reciprocal implication that women and their world are tied inexplicably together. This, in turn, renders causality inoperable in human existence. It is not a matter of one prior event producing another event but, rather, the parts reciprocally determine each other. This also implies there is a human-world structure which is irreducible to objective reality (Colaizzi, 1978). Beavers (1977) states, "people are whole, divided into body and mind only with great disservice to them and a coherent reality" (p. xvii), and he goes on to say that studies of human beings require a scientific model which includes the interactional, mutually influencing qualities of parts in relation to each other. These qualities are present in both the researcher and the researched. Beavers (1977) writes, "There is either admitted or unadmitted bias from the personal history and subjective experience which are brought to events" (p. 184). It is important for science, particularly a science of humans, to recognize, as well as respect the importance of subjective reality, and individual choice.

Truth

A premise of human science research is that there is no one truth nor set of universal laws regarding human beings or research with them. All knowledge is relative to a person's perspective and a persons' historical and cultural situation colors "reality." It is with subjective vision we view the world and reality. Person-in-the-world is the unit of study as it is the person's perception of him or herself in the external world that is thought to be the critical factor (Valle & King, 1978). Polkinghorne (1983) states, "as a method, objectivity becomes a region that is built on consciousness and not an empirical reality" (p. 42). Empiricism in human science research, does not necessarily mean following the methods of experimental science, rather, it means knowledge based on (or derived from) experience (Flew, 1979). Knowledge then is not what is certain, but is fallible and represents the best explanation available. It develops in an historical and cultural context. The human science approach attempts to preserve the unity of a person's life while still being an empirical, vigorous discipline (Valle & King, 1978). The meaning of truth, in this research, is the understanding or commitment to the research phenomenon as the most "accurate available description of the reality it purports to describe" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 246). In actuality truth is impossible to prove absolutely correct, but is a reasonable decision made by persons, based on all the available evidence. The human realm can be studied with methodological rigor, general validity, and critical examination -- but not with absolute certainty.

Methodological Pluralism

As a result of the above, human science methodology does not follow recipes but rather methodological pluralism (Salner, 1986). The variability of method reflects the variability of questions being asked. The questions reflect the purpose of the research and the method reflects the question (Salner, 1986). Greater knowledge of the topic under investigation is gained if as many aspects of a phenomenon as possible are illuminated, including the "inside view of human nature that we all possess" (Giorgi, 1970, p. 26). Human science becomes the creative search to understand better (Polkinghorne, 1983), a process which "embodies all of the capacities of the mind operating together" (p. 217). A multiplicity of perspectives holds promise for full understanding and knowledge of the topic. The different way of thinking required by phenomenological research provides a new set of glasses for looking at parent education within a family. Beavers (1977) asserts that an "abolition of all schools and cults and a resultant synthesis of the valued contributions of many current theoretical systems" (p. 11), is necessary for the appreciation of the nature of the scientific method. In this context, human science allows the researcher to select the most appropriate method from among alternatives. Both natural science and human science methods can add to our knowledge as they function in complementarity (Colaizzi, 1978). For example, if a researcher wants to study the relationship between age and intelligence the experimental method may be preferred but, if however, the researcher wants to know of the experience of aging then a phenomenological, human science approach may be best suited. Both add to our knowledge.

Products of Human Science Research

Whereas the expected products of natural science research are laws which can be used to build theory and predict human action, the products of human science research are the "elucidation and understanding" descriptions of experience at a personal level (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 289). Data, describing the givens of experience, is reduced and made the topic of reflective analysis so the researcher can describe the meaning. That is; the appearance or verbal descriptions of the phenomena are not "the real" but are "the means by which we can come to know the real" (Giorgi, 1970, p. 151). We need to go beyond that given in experience to what "is," the essence, which is concealed within the data as the phenomenon is located in the dialectical relationship of a person and her world (Valle & King, 1978). The aim is to, "try and be exhaustive with respect to the given and learn from it" (Giorgi, 1986, p. 163). Polkinghorne (1983) explains that these cannot be causal explanations because cause can have reference only to objectively observable properties of physical objects. In human science all aspects of being human are considered the object of inquiry. The essence of a phenomenon, however, is not idiosyncratic but general, although not universal (Giorgi, 1970).

Validity and Reliability

In human science research, validity is important, just as it is in natural science. However, there are different ways to achieve valid research in human science methology, stemming from the different philosophical base. One essential question for the human science researcher is whether the description expresses the truth as it is preverbally lived by the subject (Wertz, 1984). Validity rests on the precision and comprehensibility with which the research refers to the essential constitutants or structures that constitute the phenomenon. It requires rigour on the part of the researcher to achieve this "truth," and there are various procedures which aid in this direction, such as imaginative variation, respiralling and researcher qualities.

In order to insure a valid understanding of meaning, the researcher continuously engages the co-researcher to comment upon, or criticize each level of analysis. Respiralling is an important method as the researcher returns to participants for more detail. For example, amplification or clarification of previous dialogue may be necessary for one or several co-researchers. Thus the descriptions are grounded in the experience of the co-researcher and all meanings ultimately confirmed by that person.

Imagining all sides of the phenomenon under question, and all forms of the phenomenon, can also insure a valid interpretation of results. In this technique the researcher intentionally alters, in imagination, different aspects of the experience as given (Polkinghorne, 1979). Once the researcher has reflected on all forms of the phenomenon she is better able to outline the essential experience of the particular co-researchers she has chosen.

Researcher qualities such as empathetic listening to the co-researchers, a suspension of belief, and open-ended questioning are also very critical to a valid understanding. The researcher must encourage participants to give as full a description of their experience as possible, unencumbered by expectations. The experience must entirely belong to the co-researcher, and researcher qualities assist this process.

The ability to communicate the meanings of the experience to others is an essential component of validating research. Giorgi (1970) states that for science to be valid, it must arrive at "an inter-subjectively valid truth" (p. 224) among a group of people who are qualified to judge the data. If the insight gained is communicated well to other scholars, then they will recognize the description as a statement of the "essence of the phenomenon themselves" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 45). The criteria for the descriptive statement as suggested by Ernest Keen (as cited in Polkinghorne, 1983), are vividness, accuracy, richness and elegance. In human science research, the observer and the observed are both part of an interactional system and they are conceptualized as an interacting unit. Validity is in the subject/object context of the belief that all human knowledge is derived from the processes of interpretation (Salner, 1986). Validity is also viewed from within the framework of discussion about the validity of symbolic interpretation and communication as all results are language dependent. Because science necessitates interpretation, different people could arrive at different results. These differences may be interpreted as part of the ongoing process of uncovering deeper and fuller understanding of essences (Polkinghorne, 1983). Insights deepen as various researchers explore a particular phenomenon. Generalizations came from the data rather than being a priori confirmations, and try to preserve the structural lived whole (Valle & King, 1978) of the particular experiences lived herein. The generalizability of human science research is thus determined by its existential relevance.

The essence of being reliable, in both natural and human scientific terms means being trustworthy, and dependable, thereby inspiring confidence and faith in results obtained. In human science reliability is closely related to validity and is "persistence of meaning through the factual variations" (Wertz, 1986, p. 200). In this methodology reliability is not achieved by repeated enactment of the same perspective, nor holding context constant, but by examining divergences as well as convergences in data, thereby correcting meanings revealed in a singular example. Uncertainty and partial truths are acknowledged as limitations of the research yet reliability is achieved if essential meaning is brought into more clear focus. Thus in human science, "reliability cannot be separated from validity since it has no other intention than to bring what is being studied into focus in its essential meaning" (Wertz, 1986, p. 200).

Phenomenological Research

Within a human science, qualitative tradition there are various accepted methods. While phenomenological research is one of them, others include phenomenography, hermeneutics, and ethnography. The phenomenological method was defined by Husserl (1859-1938) as a "systematic investigation of consciousness and its objects" (Flew, 1983, p. 157). Heidegger (1889-1976) also adopted Husserl's phenomenological method in order to examine the data of immediate experience, while "discarding preconceived epistemological and logical constructions that make a distinction between consciousness and the external world" (Flew, 1983, p. 143). Phenomenology follows the philosophy of human science research and therefore views human action as contextual and embedded in the historical, social and cultural situation.

The foundation of phenomenology is experience. Husserl believed that by describing what has been lived on a pre-reflective level we can reach the bedrock of human experience and overcome the Cartesian body/mind split. The phenomenological researcher then must actively engage the co-researcher throughout all levels of analysis.

Phenomenological research employs an understanding-descriptive method rather than an experimental-explanatory one, with the aim toward the explication and illumination of the essential structure of the phenomenon. It attempts to preserve the wholeness of human beings and grasp the essence of a human phenomenon after applying a method of reduction to the data. Reduction in this sense means to take the described experience and lift out or "see" the essential (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 42). Meaning is all important.

This is quite different from a science of logical empiricism which has a commitment to prediction, theory and form. Measurement precedes existence in this perspective and the status of the phenomenon is due, "at least as much to the operations of the psychologist ..." (Giorgi, 1970, p. 65). It seeks to reveal a quantitative dimension of reality.

Phenomenological research seeks to develop presuppositionless, structural descriptions of what is given in experience (Polkinghorne, 1981). That is, once the researcher has reflected on her own internal biases, stated them, and collected data in the form of verbal descriptions of "givens" of the experience, then the essential aspects of the givens are uncovered and made explicit. The structural descriptions are presented in pre-reflective dialogue, and in the process of research the experience is examined through linguistic symbols and emerging structures described. The structural sequences have their meaning in themselves in the human world (Polkinghorne, 1983). It is then a method of descriptions grounded in human experience which can inform and supplement correlational and experimental research. The full psychological meaning of the event is thus uncovered by this process (Giorgi, 1970).

Human Science Research and Parent Education

There has been a considerably large amount of research into the effects of parent education, all of it within a natural science tradition. The holistic nature of women in their families has largely been ignored and success determined by behavioural outcomes or parental self-report measures. The process occurring in such groups has not been studied as it does not lend itself well to the natural scientific method. This may be because of the difficulty with measurement, as well as development of a priori hypothesis. How can process be quantified without being distorted or destroyed? The holistic nature of phenomenology may provide a more integrated picture of the transition from parent education group to home. Through a descriptive science we may learn the process.

Several researchers have indicated a need for a study of process. Dembo, et al. (1985) conclude in their analysis that research has not been able to state what are the responsible components for change when it does occur. In addition, Tavormina (as cited in Abidin, 1980) suggests that the research literature has not examined the underlying process variables that influence course outcome as measured, and there has not been any systematic search for common denominators in courses that are effective. He states that it is necessary to broaden the scope of parameters for success, rather than simply child behaviour, in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the parent counselling process. Clarke-Stewart (1981) indicates that a more detailed monitoring of what is actually happening in courses, and because of courses, is necessary. She suggests parent education rests on a number of untested assumptions such as, information, given to parents about children, will change a mother's behavior in the home, and that what the program designer intends to happen actually happens.

The complex nature of families fits within an ecological model of functioning. A phenomenological analysis provides the opportunity for a more contextual, self-aware approach. Through the active engagement of co-researchers the phenomenon can reveal itself and add to understanding, thereby enhancing existing information from natural science studies.

Conclusion

Although natural science research and human science research have differing philosophical foundations, leading to different methods, they can compliment each other. They reflect different conceptions of objectivity, validity and generalizability. We have information about parent education based on a natural scientific method but lack information about what happens between group and home and how the information from the group becomes integrated in the family. The phenomenological approach is the appropriate method to enhance our understanding.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Study

There are no other phenomenological studies dealing with this topic of which I am aware. In an analysis of the experience of transition between parent education group and the home, the wholeness of the phenomenon would be lost if the natural science method was to be used. It is not only the perceived differences in children as a result of the course, that I wish to understand, but also the dynamics occurring in the family and group that assist an integration or disintegration of course concepts and tools. I wish to investigate the world-view of each participant and the meaning of such a group to the family system. This is the study of the person within the context of the parent education group as well as the family system, as experienced by the family member who has participated in both systems -- the lived-world experience of these mothers. Phenomenological methodology was chosen for this study in order to achieve an adequate descriptive representation of the experience; one that is comprehensive and will magnify unknown dimensions of the phenomenon. To restate, the purpose of the method (Polkinghorne, 1979) is to deepen our understanding of the structures in experience by describing their parts and the relationships among them.

The methodology consists of a set of guidelines for engaging with the phenomenon, as it is experienced. The method used for this study was adapted from the work of Colaizzi (1978), Polkinghorne (1983), Weisgarber (1988). The following description of the methodological process includes a rationale for the study, orientation and bracketing, procedure, description of co-researchers and interview format.

Orientation and Bracketing

A vital component of phenomenological research is self-reflection by the researcher. Involvement and interest in parenting includes a personal investment of attitudes, feelings and values. Bracketing is the process by which expectations, prejudgements, beliefs, hypotheses and hunches (Collaizi, 1978) are scrutinized, clarified and consciously suspended, so that the modes and objects of consciousness to be seen, are seen as they are in their original appearance (Polkinghorne, 1981), with as little researcher bias as possible. The validity of the research method is thus enhanced because it demands an awareness of how one becomes involved, a self-consciousness about the beliefs regarding the particular context of research and an ongoing awareness of preconceptions (Becker, 1986; Salner, 1986; Weisgarber, 1988).

One of the premises of phenomenological research is that the topic is not incidental to the investigator. My familiarity with the topic of parent education began when I participated in a parenting group over 12 years ago. This course was based on Children the Challenge (1964). I then had three young children and desired to understand their developmental needs as well as techniques which could be used to decrease my own frustration when disciplining. I wondered then what other parents did to gain cooperation and what I could learn from others. The course I took was sponsored by a local school and was enlightening for me. I learned of many things I did right as well as fresh ideas intended to gain cooperation. My husband did not participate in that group as it was held during the day. Our relationship was such that time could be spent some evenings discussing the new ideas with him and determining how they would fit into our family structure. As prime caregiver, I was with the children most of the time and it was my frustrations I wished to decrease. As the relationship with my children grew, I noticed other parents who were experiencing frustration and wished they too could have the benefit of "parent education." Later, both my husband and myself participated in a Parent Effectiveness Training course (Gordon, 1970) and found additional skills we could utilize with our children as well as with other people with whom we interacted. Later still, the opportunity came to instruct a program based on Adlerian principles. My bias is toward this type of group parenting, wherein beliefs, attitudes and practices are addressed. A presupposition I hold is the belief that if only practices are dealt with, change cannot be permanent and there is a lasting dependency on the instructor. I believe that only through an integration can permanent change occur, as overt behaviour is a result of beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge. This may or may not be true. As I worked with several others in parenting, certain beliefs come into my awareness. Reflecting on these now ...

1. Parenting is a family experience. Although often only one member of the family participates in the group, it is the whole family that undergoes change, whether they are aware of this or not. As the participating parent tries new ideas and alters her beliefs, children's responses change, creating a difference in all family interactions. It is impossible for just one person to change without this effect.

2. A group, wherein topics are openly discussed, is presumed the most beneficial. In this setting parents learn from other parents as well as from the leader. Further, there is increased opportunity for clarification and elaboration of ideas. Moreover, parents' frustrations can be decreased simply by knowing that their children are normal and they are not reacting specifically for you.
3. Parents are dealing with their own issues through their parenting and a useful course will address these. This means to say that if a parent needs control or comfort, these aspects emerge in parenting, thereby impacting the child.
4. There can be resistance to parenting changes at home by those who do not participate. Those who do not participate do not undergo belief changes to the same extent and therefore may resist certain ideas. The beliefs a person brings into parenting are based on their own context of being parented but are often unconscious. Parenting education makes these beliefs conscious and therefore open up to questioning by the participant.
5. Goals of participants vary. Some parents in a volunteer, non-clinical group are there for social reasons, while others are there because of a special problem in the parent-child relationship. Still others are participating in order to enhance an already positive relationship and understand upcoming issues.
6. Adlerian principles of overcompensation, private logic and a fictional final goal are accepted by the author as true. Yet, for this particular study, I attempted to set aside these values as I approached analysis of the data. Because of their complexity,

course concepts, such as active listening, or determining children's purposes, may be difficult to implement in the home but my experience suggests that it can lead to independent action by parents and a decreasing dependency on an "authority" for ideas.

7. Parents often react to children's behaviour in ways that are self-defeating. For example, they may constantly criticize in order to help children know what they are doing wrong and correct it. Yet the children become more discouraged in the process. It is important to bring these reactions into consciousness.
8. A parenting course that wishes to make a permanent impact, takes place in a therapeutic setting and the leader needs counselling skills in order to facilitate change and decrease resistance. Yet I don't believe the goal is to make parents behave a particular way, but rather to encourage awareness so that parents are able to achieve their intended goals.
9. A parent education course, although focusing on the parent/child relationships in the course, teaches concepts that are applicable to any human relationship. The potential therefore, is that through such a course participants will strengthen their interactional skills in all situations.

Research Implications

The bracketing process is valuable in that it can alert the researcher to her conceptual predispositions and potential blind spots. I became quite aware that I do believe parent education has potential to assist relationships yet I am unaware of its actual or perceived impact in other families. If the impact is perceived as positive then parents may be willing to spend time learning or attending a second course if necessary.

After taking a course in family therapy in the winter of 1987, I became aware of the impact of family relationships on individuals and I began to try and fit a family therapy perspective into parent education. As a parent educator of nine years, I began to wonder if it was all for nought; are the participants able to use the concepts in their families? Is there room to address family issues within a course? Who should attend courses? These were all questions I did not have answers to and the literature did not appear to answer them either. I did not want to analyze the data from an Adlerian perspective as I am aware I could impose my predispositions on the data. Therefore the data analysis does not follow any theory. The course content actually has components of all four of the root metaphors suggested in the literature review and one could switch their perspective to each. (see Appendix B). The aim is to let the data speak for itself in accord with the phenomenological method.

These biases and presuppositions may be reflected in this research and need to be taken into account when assessing its validity. I am aware that I am not attempting value free research. As a researcher I co-constitute the larger context of the research project along with the phenomenon studied. As Taylor (1978) has emphasized, there is no value free or unbiased research as we are always in the process of interpreting at some level.

Procedure

Co-Researcher Selection

The principle criterion for choosing participants was that they be able to provide a full description of the group experience plus the experience of taking the learned concepts and ideas into a home and family system, in order to illuminate the phenomenon (Wertz, 1984). Four women were chosen from a class list of participants who were in a parenting course. The co-researchers who were selected felt that they could provide descriptions of their experience. They all have direct experience with the phenomenon and they stated an interest in discussing it. Because it is most often women who attend parent education courses, women co-researchers were asked to participate. These females were all participants in a day-time parenting course. There were no males in the course. Each participant was asked to keep a diary of her experience in the group and at home. In addition, a recorded interview was used to expand and clarify the messages in the diary and to obtain valuable background information. The women were asked to assume a reflective stance in discussing their experience. Actual behaviours in the home were not directly observed, however, two of the interviews did take place in the home setting. In the interviews, I worked rigorously to allow them to speak freely, unhampered by my expectations or prejudice. The particular course was chosen as I am very familiar with it because I assisted in its design. It is Adlerian-based, offering a belief system as well as techniques. Moreover, in this specific course, communication skills are also taught to the participants as well as child management techniques, and in addition time is spent discussing parental stress. The course length is ten weeks, two hours each week in the morning. The leader of this course is a female (not myself) who has worked in parent education for over ten years and also helped design the course utilized. She is an experienced school counsellor.

Description of Co-Researchers

The purpose of phenomenological research is to increase the understanding of lived-experience and therefore participants are chosen that are able to offer insights into their salient experience in their world. The participants, all married, are from different cultural backgrounds and family experience. Table I presents details about each co-researcher. It is the first time Cathy has participated in such a course or read material on the topic of parenting. However, she has attended a mental health clinic in the past. Barb and Leslie have not taken a course in the past, but have read extensively in the area. Leslie has experienced previous problems in her life and has been to see "psychiatrists and psychologists." These problems were not child related but were of a personal nature. Roberta, who has a French Canadian background, took the same course the year before and is taking it again with a different course leader. All of the women live in a suburban community adjoining a major city. Cathy, Barb and Leslie live in their own home, while Roberta lives in a townhouse condominium.

Interview Format

A preliminary phone call was made to each co-researcher at which time details as to who I was, and the topic under study described. It was emphasized in this initial conversation, that this was not a course evaluation, but rather an investigation of their lived-experience in the group and at home, while interacting with their children and husband. The importance of hearing their honest experience was stressed. The participants knew I was interested in the area as a course leader, but were not aware that I had assisted in the course design.

Each participant was interviewed individually, two of them at home and two at the course location. The participants made the decision as to where the interview would take place. After signing a release stating the interview could be audio-taped (Appendix C) I began with an open-ended question, "What has been your experience in the group and when you bring these concepts home?" The purpose of the personal interview was to create an atmosphere which allows the research participant to "unguardedly describe her life-world experiences of the phenomenon studied by the researcher," (Becker, 1986, p. 109) in order to allow me to enter her life-world. Rapport was an essential ingredient as the interview was essentially an interpersonal encounter (Becker, 1986).

Less-open questions were utilized for clarification as I felt necessary. Each was told a pseudonym would be used to ensure anonymity, and that she would be asked to read the analysis to ensure a valid interpretation. If any level of interpretation did not reflect what the co-researcher meant, it was discussed until the interpretation did reflect her thoughts and feelings.

Table 1

Tabular Description of Co-researchers

	Age	Educational Level Attained	Number of Years Married	Husband's Age	Educational Level Attained	Age & Sex of Children	Woman's Position in Family of Origin	Number of Course Sessions Attended	Where From
Cathy	30	11	10	34	12	girl, 8 yrs girl, 7 yrs girl, 13 mos	4th of 11	5/10	Rural Alberta
Barb	34	12	11	36	12+ 2 years college (marketing)	girl, 7 yrs boy, 5 yrs	2nd of 2	10/10	Urban Ontario
Leslie	36	12	17	36	12	boy, 10 yrs girl, 8 yrs girl, 5 yrs	1st of 5	8/10	Urban Alberta
Roberta	36	11+ trade (hairdressing)	4	36	9+ 2.5 years trade (chef)	girl, 2 yrs boy, 3 mos	3rd of 4	10/10	Rural Quebec

CHAPTER 4: PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of research regarding women taking one parent education group experience into their families. Thus two contexts are interrogated as to relatedness and the meanings allowed to emerge as fully as possible. Guidelines for this methodology and its limitations are discussed by Colaizzi (1978):

> It must be emphasized that the research procedures of analysis that I employed should be viewed only as typical, and are by no means definitive; ...the listed procedures and their sequences should be viewed flexibly and freely by each researcher, so that, depending on this approach and his phenomenon, he can modify them in whatever ways seem appropriate (p. 59).

A method that expresses, as well as reflects, the experience being studied is necessary. To this end the work of several researchers (Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1970; Weisgarber, 1988) was examined and a method of analyzing the data phenomenologically developed. It begins with the questions posed by the researcher and answered by the co-researchers. These questions are intended to access the lived-world experiences of the co-researchers. Procedurally I lift out categories of description at each level of analysis. The end result attempts to illuminate the essential structures of the phenomenon. The steps are outlined below. In this study "the group" refers to the particular parent education group (Appendix B) and "the family" is the specific family context each mother takes her group experience into as a participating member. Therefore, although the co-researchers have the group in common, the family experience is different requiring varying adaptations by the co-researchers.

Verbatim Transcript to Meaning Units

In the first stage of analysis the line by line descriptions, as taped, are transcribed verbatim. The transcripts are included in Appendix A. Each transcript is read through several times, while the tape is playing, in order to help me get a sense of each experience. The transcript of each person is then grouped into natural meaning units. A meaning unit is my initial understanding of what the co-researcher meant by a particular verbal sequence. The numbered units are also noted in Appendix A, down the right hand side of each page. As the validity of the method rests on an understanding of experience, the initial meanings were shared with each co-researcher for her confirmation.

Emergent Themes: Within Protocols

At this stage the investigation involves an analysis of the data within each participant's protocol. As explained by Colaizzi (1978), the marginally noted meaning units are studied for Emergent Themes (see Table 2). At this point it is important to maintain contact with the original protocol as themes emerge from the lived-world experience of each co-researcher. These themes are not related to any particular theory which would impose itself on the data. The process consists of outlining the themes, priorizing, and eliminating redundancies by analyzing each meaning unit in terms of themes selected for that data. All marginal numbers from Appendix A, that corresponded with meaning units, are included under the Emergent Themes. The co-researchers were each asked to read her tabular summary and verify the themes as

Table 2

Emergent Themes: Within Protocols

I. Mother Role Isolation

- a) R. feels lonely and isolated as a mother (34, 35, 39, 61, 121, 123).
- b) There is a constant pressure in motherhood for R. (32, 74).
- c) Mothering does not offer positive reinforcement in itself (36, 122).

II. Process of Change

- a) Learning takes time and patience (2, 50, 112, 114).
- b) R. must first sense a dissatisfaction before change (25, 113, 118).
- c) R. must integrate the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours into a wholeness within the self before change is complete (22, 111, 116).
- d) R. learns from hearing others and from practising different behaviours (45, 58).
- e) Family change occurs after self change yet they support each other and are interdependent (24, 115).
- f) Change generalizes into different contexts (57, 64).

III. Individual Openness

- a) R. must be open to new ideas and experiences in order to change and learn (1, 11, 27, 51, 54, 55, 73, 103, 109).
- b) Openness creates awareness of shared experiences and uniqueness, a realization of self-other reciprocity. (83, 84, 85).
- c) R. takes a risk with openness as it is less secure (52, 53).
- d) R. must overcome fears and set aside biases to be truly open and support helps her do this (59).

(Table continues)

Emergent Themes: Within Protocols

IV. Importance of a Belief Foundation

a) R. needs to be conscious of beliefs to proceed as effectively as possible and the parenting group provides the discussion of concepts that is necessary (72, 81, 93, 110, 117).

b) A theoretical belief system provides a world-view as a focus for responsible decision-making (23, 119).

c) R. can be increasingly flexible with a conscious belief system (95, 97).

d) The importance of a conscious belief system is that it applies throughout the parenting experience (78, 82).

V. Family Communication

a) R's family becomes more cohesive through communication (6, 8, 10, 93, 96).

b) R. believes that the way you have been parented is the automatic basis for our parenting (68, 90, 120).

c) A parenting group can provide the skills for a negotiation of differences (7, 14, 91, 98).

d) R. discovers that communication learned in the parenting group applies in other areas (91, 92, 99).

e) Mother-child problems affect the whole family and R. wants to discuss issues (86, 88, 89, 94).

f) R. supports change in her husband (9).

VI. Group Support

a) Felt support is encouraging and helps R. to grow (5, 26, 44, 46, 56, 69, 95, 101).

b) R. feels that other mothers understand her more than her husband understands her (33, 37, 100).

c) R. feels accepted in the group and this leads to a sense of belonging (35, 38, 104).

d) R. learns that improved communication helps provide support (15).

(Table continues)

Emergent Themes: Within Protocols

e) When R. feels support she can give support (43, 62, 71).

VII. Group Belonging

a) R. increases in confidence and security when she belongs and the parenting group provides this (12, 106, 126).

b) When R. belongs she is freed to express herself without fear of rejection (20, 42, 48, 49).

VIII. Leader Importance

a) R. learns that the leader is there to empower the participants in a group (16, 17, 19).

b) Once trust is established, R. can become more open (18, 105, 108).

IX. Desire for Impact

a) As a parent, R. shows a desire to have impact with her children (40, 77).

b) R. feels when she has a foundation for active parenting she has more impact in the world as a parent and as an individual (21, 66, 67, 75, 79).

c) R. increases her impact through conscious knowledge (3, 76).

X. Family Rules

a) P. is anxious to do the right thing with her children (4, 47, 60, 62, 87, 102, 122, 124).

b) Shared responsibility is important to R. (28, 30, 31, 41, 80, 125).

c) Parental responsibility lies with this mother (29).

(Table continues)

Emergent Themes: Within Protocols

I. Family Communication

- a) How her family negotiates impacts C.'s practices (24).
- b) C.'s communication with her daughter improves as she now empathizes (27, 28, 30, 31, 52, 53).
- c) Family communication includes her self with others (8, 54, 65).
- d) C.'s communication with others includes a relationship issue that is often unspoken (6, 7, 26, 41).

II. Process of Change

- a) Change is a difficult process for C. (2, 14).
- b) Change takes C.'s conscious effort (3, 16, 29).
- c) Change in C. causes, and is caused by, others in the family (5, 56, 58).
- d) C.'s change begins with awareness of a need to parent differently (35, 50).
- e) Once there is a family agreement then C. can generalize (33).
- f) Once C. accepts herself then change is possible (76, 79).

III. Self Reflection

- a) C. needs to be aware of her own unique reactions (4, 62, 63, 64, 67, 68).
- b) Self acceptance affects her family (57, 71, 73, 75, 77).
- c) Her children are separate individuals who react (40, 75).

IV. Importance of Parenting Foundation

- a) A common rationale is important to her family (9, 10, 25, 32, 70).
- b) A foundation provides a structure for C. to approach many issues (13, 17, 29, 38, 47).

(Table continues)

Emergent Themes: Within Protocols

c) If C. does not understand a rationale, it is difficult to make it part of family practices (39).

V. Family Rules

a) C. implements decisions but is not necessarily the conscious decision maker (23, 34, 49).

b) C. generally disciplines (19, 20).

VI. Mother Role Isolation

a) The feelings of mothering are frustrating for C. and create pressure (59, 60, 61).

b) C. needs her husband's support (21, 55).

VII. Group Support

a) Sharing in the group can help C. see things from a different point of view (41, 42, 44).

b) Sharing in the group gives C. support (18).

c) C. can clarify concepts through the group (11, 46).

VIII. Group Belonging

a) Group sharing helps C. feel belonging (12, 15).

b) The family group can be a necessary support (35, 69).

IX. Leader Importance

a) The leader is seen as an authority (1, 24, 43).

b) The leader is an important part of the group (45).

X. Individual Openness

a) Openness to ideas is necessary before change (37, 48).

XI. Desire for Impact

a) C. wants to have impact in parenting (51, 66, 72).

(Table continues)

Emergent Themes: Within Protocols

I. Desire for Impact

a) B. feels a lot of pressure because she wants to do her best at parenting (3, 34, 38, 60, 64, 65, 68).

b) Parenting offers B. an area for impact (26, 45, 52, 71).

c) B. is frustrated without some impact (12, 72).

II. Group Support

a) Acceptance from others is important to relieve B.'s pressure (32, 33, 36, 37, 48).

b) B. feels motivated by the group (5, 17, 49, 70).

c) The parenting group is more objective than her family group (34, 35).

d) Group support helps B. clarify the concepts (4, 27).

e) Group support helps B. overcome loneliness (25).

f) Confidentiality is not an issue for B. (46).

III. Family Rules

a) Family pressure makes changes difficult (56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62).

b) B. takes most family responsibility (10, 43, 44, 51, 53).

c) Problems are not isolated with one person in a family (8, 14).

d) B. wants her husband's support (54).

e) B. parents differently when extended family is observing (55).

IV. Self Reflection

a) B.'s natural method to parent may not feel comfortable and even be frightening (21, 23, 40, 63).

b) B. becomes more aware of herself through the group (11, 41).

c) B.'s automatic reaction may be based upon old patterns and she feels it is important to become aware of them (20).

(Table continues)

Emergent Themes: Within Protocols

V. Group Belonging

a) B. feels reduced pressure when she senses a connectedness to others (28, 30, 31).

VI. Importance of a Parenting Foundation

a) B. needs a conscious rationale based on information (22, 50, 67).

b) A foundation gives B. a plan for approaching issues (13).

c) B. needs a parenting belief system (16).

VII. Process of Change

a) Part of changing is consciously doing things different (19, 73).

b) Change is difficult as she is dealing with different people who react to her (12, 18).

c) Resistance to change comes from within herself as well as from others (69).

d) It is easier to change when she can directly apply learnings (40).

e) Being consciously aware of actions and words helps create change (11).

VIII. Family Communication

a) The parenting group assists B. in understanding human beings in general (47).

b) B.'s communication in the family can improve through becoming more aware of her impact on others (11).

IX. Mother-Role Isolation

a) B. can feel very lonely even when living in a family (24, 36, 39).

X. Leader Importance

a) B. trusts in authority to provide expertise (15).

(Table continues)

Emergent Themes: Within Protocols

I. Group Support

- a) L. maintains motivation to change through support of others (19, 21, 28, 33, 36, 45, 51).
- b) When L. feels supported, she can support others (51, 38, 54).
- c) Support of the group and family is essential for L. (43).
- d) Without group support, for L. the course could be overwhelming (50).

II. Process of Change

- a) By applying one thing at a time, L. can remain encouraged (4).
- b) Change requires continuous conscious effort (5, 6, 8, 9, 13, 27, 47).
- c) Part of L's change is overcoming past messages (10, 37).
- d) Change is a slow process (18, 55).
- e) Change is not permanent until L. has integrated it in herself (26, 52).
- f) L. must be ready before change will occur (35).

III. Self Reflection

- a) L. can feel guilty about past mistakes (2).
- b) L. must look at herself and her blocks to change (14, 20, 39).
- c) Past issues affect L's parenting and need to be understood and resolved (34, 40, 42).

IV. Importance of Parenting Foundation

- a) Once L. understands the philosophy, she can apply it in all areas of life (11, 46).
- b) L. believes society, in general, needs a belief system (12).
- c) A belief system comes before the tools can be used in L.'s family (16, 44, 49).

(Table continues)

Emergent Themes: Within Protocols

d) L. needs a foundation as a basis for dialogue between herself and her husband (23).

e) A foundation provides a rationale for L. (29).

V. Family Communication

a) Family communication leads to increased cohesiveness (30, 31).

b) Through dialogue, L. and her husband can support each other in all areas, including parenting (41).

VI. Family Rules

a) L. feels parenting entails a strong responsibility to children (1).

b) Often her husband will trust L.'s judgement in so far as researching parenting options (22, 25).

c) Information from the group makes her husband feel isolated (2, 4).

VII. Group Belonging

a) Through a sense of belonging L. can support others (15, 32).

b) L. feels a connectedness in parenting to other women, different from that of her spouse (53).

VIII. Desire for Impact

a) If L. wants to have impact, she must have knowledge they can use (3).

b) The desire to have impact also creates pressure within L. (17, 48)

IX. Trust in Authority

a) L. needs to trust in order to risk trying the methods suggested (7).

descriptive of her experience. Validation also consists of ensuring all data is included in the theme selection.

Within-Protocol Analysis

This stage involves verbal analysis of the data within each participant's protocol. The meaning units are studied, as is the main text for essential components. All redundancies in the raw data are eliminated in order to outline what is essential for each person. The general themes are presented below in narrative form and highlighted with quotations from the protocols to allow the reader to follow the flow of the experience. The Within-Protocol analysis of each participant follows below.

Analyses

Roberta

The pattern of experience begins when Roberta is at home with her young child while her husband works each day. She feels "empty," despite attending to the physical needs of her child. Roberta feels socially isolated, and although she feels a strong need to provide her daughter with support, she does not feel support or understanding from her husband in her effort. She seems afraid and anxious that she will lose influence with her daughter, which will then render parenting meaningless.

In her home, her sense of isolation is exacerbated by lack of feedback in the role of mother, her main function at the present time (eg. "I was feeling really lonely"). Her child does not help her feel secure and she is unsure of her own ability to meet her daughter's non-physical needs. Her husband is often away, developing his career, and Roberta's feelings are compounded by guilt for feeling empty in her "job." She feels the pressure of responsibility for meeting her daughter's needs (eg. "... the house and kids and everything was more my responsibility"). She is anxious to do the best for her daughter, yet unsure of what this means in practical terms. In addition, she feels that a foundation, a basis for making her own decisions in parenting, is also missing, creating inconsistency and confusion (eg. "... instead of going 10,000 different ways and you never know what, you know, and you get so confused"). Roberta does not believe that she knows how to raise her child in today's world. She came from a rural Quebec community and seemed to live a sheltered experience as a child. Thus she does not feel she is fully prepared for her daughter's dependency on her throughout childhood (eg. "I cannot raise my girl on ... the same way I grew up"). Her marriage does not appear to give her the necessary energy (eg. "Like where do you get your what you need to fill your family with").

With this internal tension, Roberta experiences a need to locate a source of energy and a change in her life. She is therefore open to change because she does not wish to continue with the emptiness and the social isolation. In the context of the parent education group, Roberta begins to experience the closeness and connectedness of other mothers whom, she believes, have the same feelings and desires that she has (eg. "And you see that everybody is trying very hard to educate their children ... but you see that everybody is working hard on this, you know, taking it seriously ..."). The support and sense of belonging in the group provide the catalyst for change outside the group in the context of the family (eg. "We are in this together"). Roberta finds that although she initially wanted to depend on the leader for answers, she is encouraged to look to herself and her peer group, and as the weeks go by she begins to gain self confidence (eg. "She is more suggesting. People are coming up with solutions more. We make the final decision"). As Roberta struggles to change, her family also changes to one with increasing openness and ability to discuss differences. The issue of parental power, of whose way is more correct, seems to dissipate as Roberta and her husband increase their negotiation of parenting differences. She states, "Before I am sure I would have said, 'That's the way I think ... and that's it!'"). Roberta describes this, her second year in the same course, as a time when she can now put "seed" in the prepared "ground." Change is slow and difficult for Roberta, even though she seems motivated. She expresses that she now has an understanding of the concepts to the degree where each home situation is not an isolated incident of behaviour, but rather is an example of an underlying developmental issue and she feels she has the beliefs and skills to deal more effectively with her daughter in the social world. Her approach to her daughter as well as others begins to have structure and an organized rationale.

As communication and felt support from her husband increase, at her instigation, Roberta gains yet more confidence. Her parenting is reenergized and she feels impact that was previously not there. The sense of belonging and connectedness with other mothers is fulfilling a social need as well as empowering her in parenting. She expands herself beyond her family to other women in the community through her now conscious belief system and approach to her child. She feels also the course gives her the ability to reach out to others and know somebody will be there to support her (eg. "Even if you don't have kids you can take the course and for your own growth it would do a lot").

Conclusion

Before the start of the group, Roberta feels a need to replace the emptiness she feels in her home. As a conscious, intense parent, she seems to believe that she does not hold the skills necessary to parent in this ever-changing world.

Skills and beliefs, develop in the group, though interaction and acceptance of group members toward each other. Roberta finds the concepts from the course useful in and beyond the family system, and they become a conscious way of living, giving meaning to her "job" as an active parent. Although Roberta entered the group for "parenting" she feels enhanced interactions with those whom she connects with as adults.

Cathy

Cathy's experience begins with a conscious awareness of the need to parent differently. One of her two daughters has a "behavioural type problem" and Cathy is searching for ways to "deal with it." She enters the group realizing "something has to be done to change the way [she is] reacting to [her] children and [her] children are reacting to [her]." She is open to help, but selective about the information she takes into her home (eg. "... all you do is you take out of it what you want and shelve the rest ..."). Cathy describes herself as "spontaneous," "impatient," "short-tempered" and states that she and her 8 year old daughter are "much the same character." She describes her daughter as "stubborn." She finds that her children react to her reactions and continued reactions have formed "bad habits." She expresses a wish to start over, have a second chance at parenting and erase the guilt for her past parenting (eg. "God if I could only turn the clock back and, and get rid of all these bad habits"). She condemns herself and appears ready to ensure her daughters do not react the same way as in the past. Yet, change is difficult for Cathy as patterns are established that are difficult to alter. Cathy's self reflective knowledge of her impulsive reactions manifest themselves in the group (eg. "I can't stand a mother that takes and takes and takes ... like the patience never runs out"). Possibly in that statement may be heard the plea of a child wanting her own parent to stop the foolish actions of a "hellion." Her need, as expressed, is for a foundation, a rationale with which to approach her children and remove herself from the power struggles in which she often finds herself embroiled.

The application of "information" does not come easily as she seems to want to react with emotion to her children and not with rational planning. The issue of power often appears to interfere with child and marital relationships. There seems a need to prove who is the authority in the family. While Cathy states she and her husband "talk," the relationship issues often interfere and preclude Cathy from being able to communicate effectively with her husband. She wants to convince her husband of the "rightness" of what she has heard in the group and wishes he would just act and not question her explanation (eg. "'Well, when so and so reacts like this, do this'"). He does question though, and does not appear prepared to go along with altered practices if the benefit cannot be stated and understood by him. Negotiating is quite difficult in Cathy's family and there does not seem to be the flexibility necessary for the couple to decide what we want to do. Cathy would have liked her husband's participation in the group because, "he can't apply that information because he's getting it second hand." Cathy feels less powerful than the group, and although she states there was "a lot of discussion" in the group, her experience at home does not seem to include long discussion. While Cathy states that she gets a lot out of the group, there is not a great deal of transference into the home. She states that it should be compulsory for both parents to attend so they both hear and discuss the same things. As she is a part of the group, Cathy's experience is different from her husband's. Even though he has access to the same materials, there is something that cannot be shared.

However, as Cathy applies that which makes sense to her she experiences success, and through that success she continues. She indicates that she experiences an enhanced relationship with her eldest daughter through empathetic understanding, rather than her old way of selling a point of view (eg. "My train of thought was trying to change her mind"). This success is family success as it is also a concept that her husband understands as well.

For Cathy, the group also means increasing awareness or consciousness of her responses and increasing options for handling issues that arise during parenting. When interacting with family members, the "natural" way of responding is viewed by Cathy as outside herself and she becomes object to the self; a mirror on the self so to speak. Cathy appears to grow in her ability to see herself as an object of change as well as an agent of change for her children.

The group offers Cathy support as she shares common, yet unique, experiences. The relating of personal parent-child experiences appears to reduce the feeling that she is the only parent experiencing problems, as well as to generate ideas for future handling of issues within the family unit. Cathy's attendance in the group is inconsistent, and she seems to remain somewhat distant and separate from the others (eg. "... their method was, you know, get to the root of the problem rather than just react or ..."). The sharing that occurs through dialogue with others in the group, is, for Cathy, intended to clarify and outline issues and not to give her a sense of belonging with others. Cathy comes from a large family, as does her husband, and she remains surrounded by them in her community.

Conclusion

Cathy seems open to change, feels the need to change and feels positive toward the direction offered in the course. Yet she is unable to consistently apply concepts or ideas that she is learning as she is unable to surmount her natural inclination or gain spousal support. Cathy seems to think that her natural reaction is not always helpful to her children (eg. "That's not what she wanted to hear"). The concept of "active listening" makes the transition to the home as it is understandable to both herself and her husband and seems to address the relationship issue in the family; that of power. That particular communication concept then, is received as it has a meaningful wholeness and becomes integrated within the family unit.

Cathy states emphatically that "self-confidence" is all important and with self confidence she believes a woman can step outside her own subjective point of view, that is; there is increased self awareness of her own actions and intention. Possibly with self confidence mothers can also risk trying new behaviours without prior absolute knowledge of its effectiveness to achieve the desired results. Cathy reflects that without self confidence messages from one's own childhood may interfere with present parenting practices, even if the practices are negative. She implies that once a mother has "self confidence" she also becomes aware of her actions and able to change "bad habits" in accordance with intention. The content of the course, while useful concepts and skills for discussion, in the group, are only as good as "self confidence" and ability to take them into the home.

Barb

Barb's individual parenting experience was initiated before she had children. In preparation for parenthood, her forthcoming "job," she read many books on the topic, however there is no substitute for the actuality of parenting. Barb is a very responsible parent and feels apprehension at the prospect of possibly not doing all that she can to ensure that she is a good mother (eg. "I was terrified at the idea of parenting"). Her search is for a definition of good parenting both in attitudes and behaviours toward children. She views her own childhood negatively, the result of the perception that her own family was critical, had expectations that could not be reached, and were "dictators." As a reaction to this Barb wants to ensure there are "more positives in a day than negatives," possibly as compensation for her own parents' inabilities and to give meaning to her childhood experiences. It seems important to her that her children know that they have her support as they grow. She feels a search is necessary because her "instinct" is wrong (eg. "... I do believe it, that you will parent as you have been parented unless you make a conscious decision not to ..."). In her home Barb thinks she is more "in tune" with her children than her husband, and also believes she knows how to handle issues more effectively than he does. Parenting practices are not negotiated but rather Barb leads and her husband will "try to follow [her] example." The parenting responsibility is Barb's while her husband has other areas of responsibility. The family thinks of parenting as Barb's "thing," as it is her area for impact in the family (eg. "Well, I think he definitely follows my lead in the home, you know, where the children are concerned and that sort of thing"). Because of Barb's need to control the emotional climate of her children, she finds it frustrating when extended family is around which decreases her impact and control.

Yet Barb is willing to conform to books and "expert" advice, possibly because of her own negative family experience as she grew up.

The course "reinforces" what Barb believes in and makes her more aware of her reactions, thus helping her remain rational in her approach to her children, and not follow her negative "instinct." She believes there is a right way to handle issues with her children.

For Barb, an important part of the experience is the group support, which helps motivate her to become more aware of her parenting practices. Moreover, through group discussion, she finds the opportunity to clarify difficult concepts in parenting in a way that cannot be done through books. Most importantly for Barb, felt group support helps to relieve her sense of guilt for sometimes thinking negatively (and non-supportive) of her children (eg. "'I almost strangled my kid last night' and I know the feeling! ... and it is a real relief to know other people feel that way too"). She also discovers she may not have done a terrible parenting job to date as her "kids are normal" and not "punishing" her for past imperfections. For Barb, group members are less likely to judge and for her this is a vital component. She feels accepted and connected to this all-women group (eg. "... the nicest feeling ... that other people have the same problems that you have"). The connectedness with others helps Barb risk trying some different practices such as staying out of the children's fights. Yet, because of her need to be seen by her children as supportive, she explains her new behaviours to her children as resulting from the course, thereby excusing her behaviour. Resistance from her daughter is quick to result as her daughter wants her real mother back -- the mother who supports (eg. "Mommy, you are not my mommy any more").

The foundation gained in the course gives Barb a direction, a conscious rationale with which to approach problems. Her husband does not share the rationale as he chooses to leave the responsibility with Barb, and she wants it. Barb seems to be more connected to her own childhood "don'ts" and "shoulds" than she does to her husband's desires for their children.

As time passes, Barb becomes increasingly aware of her impact on family and human beings in general. She seems to achieve a realization of self-other reciprocity, and learns "not to interfere" with her children's relationship issues or her husband's relationship with the children although she finds it difficult and a conscious effort. ("But I don't interfere anymore. Well, it is hard sometimes not to, you know, because..."). Real change does not appear to take place because of her apparent strong belief that her children must have her support or she has failed as a parent. The increased awareness helps Barb continue to work at the "right way," however, she is also conscious of the fact after the course is over her "reactions may replace rational parenting."

Conclusion

Barb's experience begins with the felt need to stop her own "instinct" and reactions, and to parent the right way; the way the books dictate. There is little negotiating in her home as her husband passively supports Barb as the parent responsible for parenting. While she uses the word "we" to refer to her husband and herself, in actuality it is Barb who is the active parent, not because she is at home, but because she appears to have a need to set parenting direction. Barb is an apprehensive parent struggling to compensate for her own childhood experience of felt criticism in an unsupportive atmosphere. As a result of her past experience, she seems to believe she must support her children and remain positive toward them. When discipline is required, that too must be positive.

The group experience gives her the support she is seeking to help her parent rationally. There is great relief for Barb, knowing that other mothers may not always feel positive toward their children and that it is not failure on her part. When she attempts new behaviours at home she insures that her children understand it is done with the endorsement of the parenting group, implying that they are not to blame her or think she is non-supportive of them.

Barb is quite aware of her new behaviour and the difficulty she has not taking control of a situation to try and make it predictably positive. She works very hard to maintain that awareness throughout each day. Barb's attitude and behaviour change during the group experience, and she is less controlling of her children's and husband's behaviour. Yet, it seems a fragile change as the personal relationship with her own childhood remains unresolved. It is likely to be difficult for Barb to maintain the changes once the group dissolves.

Leslie

For Leslie the experience began before she took the course. She seems to have read many books in her search for a way to parent her children. In her family of origin Leslie experienced hurt, anger and fear and "swore all [her] life" she would be a different parent and give her children a different childhood experience. From her description, her own childhood was a violent, destructive experience, one to which she would not subject her children. She appears to have a strong need to compensate for her own growing experiences possibly in the effort to make meaning out of it (eg. "... and we are now very close and we know it is because of what we went through ... because we wouldn't be the people that we are if we hadn't gone through that"). Her need to "become a better parent" also means that in practice Leslie feels guilty and discouraged when she reacts "totally wrong." She believes her "instinct" is wrong and that she "didn't have the tools with [her] background and [her] knowledge." She seems to depend on "books" for parenting tools. Her intent is to change herself and her reactions to her children (eg. "... because otherwise you take out your frustrations on your kids").

Change, however, is not easy and at times Leslie feels like she is overwhelmed. Her intense search leads her to the course wherein her first impression is that she has been "doing it all wrong," despite having read "all the books" and a stated understanding of the Adlerian basis for the course. Leslie believes she understood the underlying theory of the course before she began and that she is wanting the "tools" for better parenting (eg. "So I felt so much further ahead that way, I knew, and so I could take the tools home and apply, and they still had the background to absorb ..."). She seems to understand that in the course there is "theory" and "tools" and that she already feels familiar with the theory, one that would be "really helpful to society in general to change." For Leslie there is an impatience to change and she seems to constantly battle with herself. She shuts herself in her bedroom, runs around and around the block and stays up nights in the effort to believe in herself, and assure herself that her children will not think she is a "horrible person" or a "witch."

For Leslie group support is an essential component. The sharing of experiences with other women, helps Leslie feel accepted and helps her accept herself (eg. "Ah, I am not so bad after all"). Leslie seems to feel extreme pressure to parent well and she possibly feels personally responsible for problems her children experience as they grow. Group sharing helps Leslie allow herself to "blow up" or "say the wrong thing" without the resulting discouragement overwhelming her. The course experience is much different than reading books, largely because of the support and empathy she feels with other women. Being in an all-women group was helpful to Leslie as it increases her sense of connectedness to others who share the same "heartbreak" and "frustration." Part of that sharing spontaneously focusses on the spousal relationship and help the women feel a sense of belonging to each other and the group (eg. "... and then we all laugh because we all know what they mean, we are all frustrated by the socks being ... it was okay").

Although Leslie states she is somewhat unique in the course because she feels support from her husband, the support he gives her appears to be more personal and less as a participating parent. While he seems to leave the parenting in Leslie's hands, and has not taken any courses nor "read any of the books," he may sense her need to go beyond "instinct" and look to the authority within a book. If he had chosen any other way to participate in parenting, there may have been increased conflict as Leslie is compelled from within her past memories. He seems supportive of her need to change, but leaves the responsibility with her, thereby also leaving her to blame herself when a practice fails.

For Leslie, the group experience helps her to have a different perspective toward parenting, one that is more rational. She seems more able to distance herself from her reactions and "stand back." Without the group Leslie believes she may get "lazy" and forget the things she learned, therefore she is prepared to take the course several times for reinforcement (eg. "I felt during that time, that this is something you need to take once a year").

Yet, although Leslie has a foundation of theory, receives tools in the course and feels a strong sense of support, she is not always able to apply the ideas because of "blocks." Some of the blocks come from personal upheaval or family problems which drain her of the energy to parent consciously. Other blocks are "garbage that you dumped in your garbage pile since childhood" that forever enter into her relationships with others depleting her of the internal strength needed in the mental task of parenting. Leslie has sought individual help in the past for personal mental health. However she credits one course for having the biggest impact in her search for meaning, a course also based on Adlerian theory, conducted in a group atmosphere. Again it is group support that empowers Leslie as she gains insights into herself (eg. "I felt very safe in the group and I could say things and I learned things about myself ..."). In Leslie's experience these blocks or "barriers" must first be faced and resolved by parents before the focus can be on their children's development. Knowledge of the self is therefore important for effective parenting (eg. "We need to look deep down in ourselves and find what we are really searching for"). Leslie's search seems to be for good parenting, something she has wanted from the time that she was a young child.

Conclusion

Leslie's need for the parent education course apparently stems from roots of long ago. Her connections with her negative childhood experiences create an intense pressure to succeed in parenting. Yet there are points when she wishes she could give up and "chuck it all." While the course provides a "set of tools" that work to help Leslie achieve her goals, the two most important components for her seem to be group support and self reflection. For Leslie the support of the group raises her own level of self acceptance, as well as motivates her to maintain a consciousness in parenting so that her "instincts" do not emerge. The authority of books and others is important to Leslie and therefore the parenting couple, Leslie and her husband, rely largely on the advice of others. While Leslie describes her husband as "supportive" it appears that this support is on a personal rather than parental level. Throughout the experience Leslie believes the women in the group feel a connectedness to each other which she needs for self change, and for which Leslie comes before family change. If this is so, Leslie remains at the level of self change as her family relationships appear relatively unaltered.

Tabular Summary of Themes: Across Protocols

The fourth step of this analysis involved combining the themes from the individual tabular summaries and identifying the themes across all protocols. As the process of analysis has involved a "lifting out" and a narrowing of the experience into the essential extracted components, the emergent thematic summaries are singular elements from Table 2 (e.g. encouragement, empathy, acceptance). Table 3 provides a comprehensive synthesis of all the data and clearly outlines the convergence and divergence in co-researchers' experiences.

Structure of the Experience: Across Protocols

To this point the experience of the phenomenon under study has been outlined for each co-researcher, emergent themes identified, and comparisons made among participants. The aim of phenomenological research is to "bring to light the previously hidden eidetic" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 42) through describing the various strata in order to reveal the "meaning-giving structures." The essence is that part which remains "identical in all possible variations of what is being investigated" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 43). The intuiting of essence is a "rational insight ... of a nonempirical structure of consciousness" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 45). The final analysis therefore combines and synthesizes the themes from the individual protocols so the common experience of bridging from group to family can be seen. A narrative of this essential structure is presented in generic language with examples from the verbatim transcripts of all participants to ensure the lived-experience. This narrative is meant

Table 3

Tabular Summary of Themes: Across Protocols

		Roberta	Barb	Cathy	Leslie
I.	Parenting Foundation				
	conscious beliefs	x	x	x	x
	focus for behavior	x	x		x
	flexibility	x			
	generalizability	x			x
	rationale	x	x	x	x
II.	Family Communication				
	cohesiveness	x			x
	uniqueness of members	x			
	negotiation	x		x	
	generalizability to other contexts	x			
	system effect	x	x	x	x
	supports change	x	x		
	frustration			x	
III.	Desire For Impact				
	impact with children	x	x	x	x
	beliefs give impact	x			
	consciousness gives power	x			
	pressures		x		x
	meaning in parenting	x	x		x

(Table continues)

Tabular Summary of Themes: Across Protocols

		Roberta	Barb	Cathy	Leslie
IV.	Mother Role Isolation				
	loneliness	x	x		
	pressure	x	x	x	x
	responsibility	x			
	little reinforcement	x			
V.	Process of Change				
	time & patience	x	x	x	x
	dissatisfaction leads to change	x	x	x	x
	integration of beliefs, attitudes, practices	x		x	x
	practising	x	x		x
	self change leads to family changes	x	x	x	
	conscious effort	x	x	x	x
	overcome past messages		x		x
	readiness	x	x		x
	difficultness	x	x	x	x
VI.	Group Support				
	encouragement	x	x		x
	empathy	x	x	x	x
	acceptance	x	x		x
	enhanced communication	x		x	
	support leads to supporting	x			x
	motivates	x	x		x
	clarifies ideas		x	x	
	objectivity of group		x	x	

(Table continues)

Tabular Summary of Themes: Across Protocols

	Roberta	Barb	Cathy	Leslie
VII. Group Belonging				
confidence	x	x		
security	x	x		x
freedom to express	x		x	x
can support others	x			x
connectedness	x	x	x	x
reduces pressures	x	x		
VIII. Knowledge of the Self				
new ideas & experience	x	x	x	
consciousness	x	x	x	x
risk-taking	x	x		x
overcome fears		x		x
IX. Leader Importance				
empowers	x	x		x
trustworthy	x	x	x	x
authority		x	x	x
X. Family Rules				
responsibility	x	x	x	x
father isolation		x		x
supporting	x			x
authority issues	x	x	x	x

(Table continues)

Tabular Summary of Themes: Across Protocols

	Roberta	Barb	Cathy	Leslie
XI. Self Reflection				
guilt	x	x	x	x
blocks to change			x	x
past issues		x		x
self awareness	x	x	x	x

therefore to capture the essence of the experience from the nature of the particular.

The essential structure of the transition, is one of personal growth through the verbal and non-verbal interaction occurring in the group and in the family. The pattern of family interaction is dissimilar. While Leslie describes a shared dialogue with her husband "so we would get out the book and discuss, as parents we would use the ideas from the books, we would use our own intuition and ... 'let's modify or whatever, compromise'," Cathy states "I can go home and try and explain all I can to my husband and it never comes out the same way ...." Essentially all of the women take the information and the skills from the group into their families and discuss the concepts with their spouses to a greater or lesser degree. In all cases a difference is felt in the family as a result of the parent education group.

1. Felt Need for Help with Parent/Child Relationship

The experience itself begins with a felt need for something different -- a search for the most effective way to have impact as a serious, concerned parent. For some the search begins prior to the group (eg. Barb: "I think before I went into the course I knew right from wrong from reading the books ..."), while for others it can be the first exposure to a systematic approach to parenthood (eg. Cathy: "Their method was, ... to get to the root of the problem rather than just react ..."). For Roberta the need is as a result of felt isolation and "emptiness," despite the physical demands of parenting a young family. There is a pressure in motherhood which brought the participants together. As Cathy says, "... if you're to the point where you realize something has to be done to change the way you're reacting to your children or your children are reacting to you, that's why you came here ...." There is an awareness on some level that change in family relationships is necessary or desired, and parenting identified as the main issue.

2. Area for Impact

The mothers in this study all feel motherhood as a pressure, a strong responsibility which has an uncertain outcome. Both Leslie and Barb are anxious because of their perceptions of their own negative childhoods. They both want to prevent their children, when grown, from experiencing the same feelings toward parents, and want their children to view them as good parents. The group provides a vehicle for learning how to accomplish this. While Roberta states that her own childhood memories are positive, because her children are growing up in a different time and place, she too does not feel she has the necessary skills to help them cope in today's world. The group fills a void to help her feel competent. The intention of Cathy appears to be to learn parenting skills to assist her in a rational relationship with her children, one that is less guided by emotion. Cathy tends to project her "bad habits" onto her children and views herself as having a negative influence on her children. She states a wish to reverse this. For these mothers, the course, with its accompanying beliefs is important. All agree the mindless application of techniques is not part of their search and a foundation in theory enables them to increase their confidence level when dealing with a particular issue (eg. Roberta: "This year its more like the ground is already prepared so I can put seed in it"). The foundation in the course, becomes a rationale, a pair of spectacles with which they can approach children as they develop (eg. Leslie: "... the time out the course gives you to stand back and look at things in a different perspective). The beliefs give meaning to the "tools" for parenting. In addition, the beliefs seem to give meaning to daily living in relationships with others, expanding choices within a structure (eg. Roberta: "... I feel confident about myself, not 100% but ... I am going that way instead of 10,000 different ways and you never know what"). All of the mothers in the group want a positive relationship with their children and their choices are expanded to accomplish this task with a meaning-giving belief structure.

3. Possibility for Self Change

For all these mothers part of the essence of the transition is self change, which they find difficult to accomplish. Self change appears to be a real effort as the co-constitutionality of these women is emphasized throughout their struggle. It is not a simple matter for these women to wipe out "garbage" from the past, nor can they simply change things [illegible] their present families. They are a part of their world and their world is a part of them. They are not separate objects to be manipulated by others, and they are not independent agents of the self to easily alter patterns of interaction. Leslie states that she would go to a "great class and have this great discussion on encouragement or something and I would go home and immediately be faced with a problem and it would go right over my head." Roberta adds, "Because you are a human being, I don't know what it is, but we always have a tendency to go back to our own ways and habits, the way we grew up." Cathy, talking about her sister, comments "... but she has a real chip on her shoulder about the way she was raised. And she's doing the exact same thing to her kids." Barb's experience is similar to the other mothers as she says, "... and I am feeling terrible and there are so many times ... and I mean it is so hard not to interfere ... because he ...." All of them want to change and realize self change is needed, yet none can easily step outside their historical or present context to alter patterned interactions.

Roberta, who is in the course for the second time, believes that change is more possible once the course learnings become an integrated whole. In her experience once the beliefs and attitudes become a part of the self, the behaviours will follow more easily. On the other hand, Cathy, Barb and Leslie all find that once they feel some success (in a relationship issue) they are motivated to continue. Cathy, who is taking the course for the first time, has not read materials in the past, and who missed half the course sessions, has the most difficult time applying the parenting skills from the course. It would seem that when there is more course integration within the self, the more these mothers can act differently in their world.

4. Self Awareness

For these mothers part of the essence is a growing ability to parent consciously; to sit outside themselves a little instead of simply reacting, which may result in self-defeating action. As they come to know themselves, their choices for how they will act in the world are expanding. Cathy talks about getting to the "root," Roberta speaks of preparing "the ground," and Leslie says mothers first have to "... look deep down in ourselves and find what we are searching for." They all seem very aware of past messages that may interfere with present parenting practices.

Yet, on another level the parenting course metaphorically represents the unconscious past. Roberta speaks of her "isolated" childhood, and it is "emptiness" she is now overcoming. For her the group may reduce this isolation, hence her two year participation. For Barb and Leslie, the course appears to be a metaphor for "good parenting," something both wished they had been able to receive when young. As adults they now feel they can benefit from "good parenting." For Cathy the group may represent how to overcome the parts of herself she "hates." Through increasing empathy with her daughter, she also gains empathy with herself, increasing her own self acceptance which she believes is vital (eg. "Well another one that was important was how you talk to your child .... They're a person just like you are and always being told, told, told, told all the time ... and I'm sick and tired of being told and ..."). Later she states, "I saw myself in her, and I could have just strangled her ... so much like me and I hate that part of myself.

5. System Effect

For these mothers there is a common desire to take learnings from the course into their families. The intent then is to have an effect on the total system. Yet, as previously mentioned, this is not easy.

It is difficult to take the concepts and ideas into the home when others in the home have not been participating in the group. There is interdependence between family members which makes it difficult for these mothers to re-enter the family each week with new practices. The system appears to be greater than the sum of its parts and interactions are more than simply action/reaction. For Roberta and Barb there is passive acceptance of the course from their husbands, however, little active participation or cooperation (eg. Roberta "Like he was 'ya that's good' but ..."). Cathy's husband appears to resist more openly and seems unprepared to allow unnegotiated ideas to become part of family practice. The one course idea that Cathy is able to implement, "active listening" or "talking to your child" emphasizes family members having a shared view. This is not resisted possibly because it has a reciprocal implication. Cathy expresses frustration that her husband would not just follow her verbal lead. In her home the unspoken issue of authority is unresolved, and husband and wife seem unable to reciprocally negotiate the shared practice of parenting.

In Leslie's family experience, specific tools from the course are utilized when a problem occurs but they do not seem an integrated part of the family. Possibly part of the difficulty is because there seems to be an incongruence between herself and her practices. She does not trust herself. This may create distance when her husband becomes confused by the various messages. The husbands in this study were not interviewed and therefore only the women's perspective can actually emerge. Leslie's husband appears to leave the parenting to his wife just as Barb's husband does (eg. Leslie: "It could be that he was too lazy to read the books himself but I think more that he knew that I had hit on something that was right"). The responsibility is not shared and therefore pressure remains when these mothers do not parent as they believe they must. They then blame themselves and feel guilt when they "blow it." Neither of the husbands, in Barb and Leslie's case feel the guilt. Barb particularly is needing support not received in childhood, yet does not seem to receive it in her family (eg. "He'll listen but I don't get too great a response"). Yet the course helps her involve him in parenting to a greater degree as she learns to let him be involved and deal with issues concerning the children.

For Roberta there has been a positive effect on her family unit as she and her husband negotiate shared practices. The course has given her skills to negotiate and she does not appear to have the same need to be "right" as the other mothers. In her family system the negotiating brings Roberta and her husband closer together (eg. "But he could tell me his point of view too and the way he grew up too, a part of it, ... and he is helping me too"). There is shared responsibility and an acceptance of mutually defined practices.

6. Group Support and Belonging

For all women there is felt support from the all-women parent education group they share together. There is a non-judgemental feeling, a feeling of being with others who share the same emotions. Barb explains, "The nicest feeling going to the class is finding out that other people have the same problems that you have ... it is a real relief to know that other people feel that way too." Here she finds the supportive relationships she missed while growing up. This support motivates and assists these mothers to risk making a change in behaviour at home that seems "foreign" and "unnatural." All appear to share in the difficult process where negotiation of practices in the family is ongoing, although often on a non-verbal level. The felt connectedness with other mothers encourages discussion of problems regarding the family at home; a discussion which may not spontaneously occur in a group with both men and women (eg. Barb: We laugh a lot together but also a lot of them draw into problems with the spouse ... I can identify with ..."). The guilt that they experience when they do not parent as they want themselves to is decreasing, and frees them to continue despite mistakes (eg. Barb: It is a real relief to know that other people feel that way too"; Leslie: "Ah, I am not so bad after all"). In spite of parenting being such a common experience, the women show a surprising hesitancy to expose what may be perceived as poor parenting or talk in the community about their own negative feelings toward their children. Barb appears surprised to find out that "not everybody is as perfect a parent as they appear to be to the outside world." That is; there are common problems in families and mothers do feel negative towards their families at times, and that does not make them bad people.

The leader helps the group experience feel supportive through her ability to empower the group, a possible testimony to training as a counsellor and belief in the theoretical foundation of the course. There is a trust in the instructor as "expert." The feeling becomes rather like "If she thinks I can, then I must be able to." Self confidence and a sense of importance are promoted and felt within the group (eg. Roberta: "She does not tell anybody what to do ... people are coming up with suggestions more ... and now everybody comes up with suggestions").

The empathy created is encouraging to all of these women and offers a relationship that was missing before the group began. The women co-constitute the group and they make it supportive as much as it helps them feel support. This component, of mutual support, is often missing in their family unit. In this atmosphere they are able to become conscious of their impact on others and clarify relationships. Each week they return for encouragement in the time-consuming change process.

Conclusion

The experience of the four women co-researchers in this study, is complex and difficult to synthesize. Each mother had a unique experience stemming from her own historical background, attitudes, family and personal context. Nevertheless this phenomenological study attempts to understand these complexities and the dynamic nature of change in the family. The deeper dimensions of the lived process or praxis is exposed for view. The range of personal and family experiences could not be reflected in statistical methodology. This personal, co-constituted account is personally important and meaningful to all participants.

This study begins to map out the experience of taking group-centered concepts, ideas, and discussion into the family; a bridging process that is difficult for the mothers involved in this study.

These women co-constitute the parent education group they share together, and co-constitute their separate families. Essentially, while the group support and belonging helped motivate and encourage the women, the dynamics in the family are difficult for one member to transcend. Although there are small changes within the family, the relationship patterns remain relatively unchanged. Roberta, only, is able to engage her husband in active negotiation as they learn from each other. The other women all wish the learning to be one-way and want their husbands to use the same experts they do. The husbands resist, some more openly than others thereby leaving patterned spousal interactions relatively unaltered. While the women find support in the group only Roberta is able to transfer that support to her family context.

Through the group the natural attitude of these women is transcended and they then have a new way of being-in-the-world. They are not the same as they were before the group began. They have skills and a belief foundation for parenting. Yet, while there is self growth and increased feelings of confidence in the mother, generally the pressure of responsibility has not been shared in the family. The group has widened choices for the women and has set in place a meaning-giving structure. Each of the women enjoy participating in the group and all feel there have been positive changes in mother/child relationships. Two of the mothers (Roberta and Barb), have begun to change patterns with their husbands, while for the other two there were no indications of change in spousal relationships. When the group stops and support ends, there is nothing in place to prevent the families from reverting to their pre-course state. The women seem to all sense this and wish to continue with a parenting group. The challenge remains as to how to permanently alter the family so that it can be as supportive as the group.

CHAPTER 5: GENERAL DISCUSSION

Relationship of the Present Study to the Field of Parent Education

This study is a phenomenological analysis of a parenting group experience as viewed from the perspective of female participants. The nature of the process as described suggests that group participants experience a change in world-view through group interaction and mutual support. Although only one person from each family "system" participated, personal change is possible and dynamic. The present study finds that while change is not unidirectional and directly "caused" from mother to child, (there is ongoing negotiation of parenting practices), the group may provide the catalyst within families which are ready for change (ie. there is some emptiness, looseness or stress). The experience is not a linear model of change such as described in the mechanistic metaphor. Prior to group involvement, there was frustration, isolation and the pressure of responsibility. Although the responsibility remains, now there is relief as a result of sharing common experiences. Interestingly, two of the four participants had previously tried individual mental health services in unsuccessful attempts to find help.

The present course meets an existing need for participants. The process occurring in the group identifies a sense of belonging, and felt support as two essential components of an experience which enabled personal change to occur. Natural science studies of parent education which have demonstrated positive outcomes (either child behaviour or parent attitudes and reports) have had a support component, regardless of whether they followed an organic, mechanistic, contextual or patterned interactional approach, which may partially account for reported success. For example, all Adlerian-based studies are group-oriented, as are all studies analyzing Parent Effectiveness Training (communication-based). Not all research of behavioural-based parent education is group-centered, however there has been continuous contact with the change agent (Brody & Forehand, 1985). The present study indicates that the weekly waves of group support provides clarification of ideas, and a sense of relief in knowing one's family is normal, as well as motivation for continued mental effort of parenting in a way that seems unnatural. The group is a dynamic catalyst for the possibility of self change. The support component is described continually by each of the four co-researchers. For example, Roberta states, "You can give because you are kind of energized and positively. And you see that everybody is trying very hard ... and you also see that others have more problems and some have less ... I'm not so silly and overdoing it" and Leslie adds, "... like sharing of heartbreak, the sharing of frustration, the sharing of what works and what doesn't ... was invaluable." The relationship shared by members of the parenting group provides the impetus for the women to examine their beliefs, attitudes and practices and to risk new behaviours meant to impact their children positively.

This study demonstrates the change is not easy from both the perspective of the individual as well as the family. Childhood beliefs and practices continue to have impact, for both husband and wife. Historical experiences (learned behaviour), called "instinct" by two of the co-researchers, can provide a secure base from which to grow, or a distinct need to do things differently. That is; if the childhood experience is positive, the parent feels secure and past messages are integrated, however, if the childhood experience has been negative, parenting practices may be a distinct and conscious reaction against what was done in the past. This "instinct" is not part of an organic model of functioning (biological) but rather derives from early experiences within an interacting family, whether functional or dysfunctional. Interaction and negotiation are essential in working out a parenting philosophy specific to a particular family situation. A particular pattern of interaction, may be viewed within any family as a grasping for stability which is resistent to change, or as a flexible feedback system. Skills of negotiation appear vital if ideas, concepts, and techniques gained in the group are to make the transition into the family. Therefore, it will be important to teach interactional skills which become the tools for increased positive interaction. Such skills hold opportunity to generalize from mother to spouse to child and the world beyond.

Parenting in any family is based on an implicit belief system which, through a course, can become explicit. It would therefore be beneficial for both partners in a family to attend so both parents are part of this process. Latent power issues within a family become exposed through discussion and present opportunity for resolution. Yet, as these non-verbal issues are not often openly discussed in the group and the partners may not be part of the group, the rules in the family continue and may prevent application of concepts in the home. Events which transpire in the marital relationship appear to have impact on the parent-child relationship and are important to address. In the all-women group in which the co-researchers participated, some of these issues come up spontaneously, however they may not have arisen in a male/female grouping, leaving it then to the leader to address as part of the course content. Marital relationships are not often discussed in a parenting group although current research is leading in this direction (Levinger, 1979; Brunk et al., 1987; Dadds et al., 1987; Griest et al., 1984). Brody and Forehand (1985), using a behavioural approach to parent education, found that marital distress did not interfere with behaviours directly targeted for intervention, however, they suggest that generalized changes (those behaviours not specifically targeted in the intervention program) are not likely to occur when there is more marital distress. The present study could extend this finding to offer the explanation that when patterned interactions do not alter, the learned behaviours are kept at the personal level and may not become part of shared parenting practices in that family system. A person participates in an intrinsic pattern and if conscious of that pattern change is more possible within the self and the family system. But, consciousness is only an opportunity for change, and the multidimensional context of the person's life-world impacts the actualization of the opportunity. For example, in this study each woman's historical and present context affects parenting perceptions and practices, and it is support from the group that encourages its members to risk new behaviours that in many cases are successful for the parent. However, only the women's views and issues are presented, although the husbands bring separate past historical contexts to their family relationships. Beavers (1977) believes that the system at home must be flexible, in order for family members to choose from possibilities for different behaviours presented by the outside world. This view is substantiated in the current study. If the family system is stability oriented, rather than growth oriented, opportunities for change may be viewed as threatening and not actualized.

In the course which the co-researchers attend, family of origin is discussed to some extent (This is a general practice in most Adlerian-based groups). Thus the historical background of the participants is elaborated so that participants become aware of themselves as both subjects and objects. This study finds that they become able to reflect on their parenting and able to personally decide which practices will accomplish their goals for themselves, their children and their families. Group membership is a catalyst but choosing practices is not an easy task, sometimes causing inner pain, and sometimes creating conflict in the family. Apparently, the communication skills, more than anything else, are essential for transcending potential conflict and accepting that family members are unique individuals with their own, often unconscious belief systems. Understanding and accepting the views of spouses is not part of the present course nor is the actual teaching of negotiation skills in order to meet parental needs. Family restructure occurs as the couple negotiate their previously non-explicit beliefs and wants for their family. Meaning is thus shaped by the family. Communication skills can be used to negotiate a shared practice; a practice not based solely on one parent's past or the other's, but a mutually agreeable practice. Support from the group provides the catalyst for the family but spousal support maintains change -- or the status quo.

A communication-based group may provide the necessary skills for one spouse to negotiate within the family. However, a course based solely on communication may not give the participant other parenting skills to cope with child behaviours. In addition, parent education courses with a communication-based approach often do not discuss past issues that interfere with parenting beliefs and practices. As Barb states, "And as I continue to stay out of their fights, as much as I can, it has really lessened .... Ya, I can't believe the change." This statement implies both changing past interactional patterns, wherein Barb becomes less actively involved in her children's problem, as well as a specific parental behaviour (stay out of fights). The patterned interactions take place in a particular context. All family members are affected.

A large part of the process for the mothers in this study appears to be the self-growth of participants. According to each of the co-researchers the perceived self-efficacy of the woman affects the parent-child relationship. Two of the four co-researchers had sought previous professional help. Another had read parenting books prior to conception of either of her children because of anxiety regarding parenting. The mental energy required in the parenting process is draining and once again peer support, as well as the skill of the leader, empowers the participants in their homes. You see it in Safeway ... the frustrated mothers ... they have got anger directed in toward them and you know that there is something blocking that needs dealing with "because otherwise you take out your frustrations on your kids ... we've got so many pressures ... and I think the majority of people short change their kids first," (Leslie). Cathy also alludes to the fact that once a mother's confidence level raises she can attempt to parent as she wishes in her ideal vision for herself. But part of the parent education process, as identified in this study, is accepting oneself as an imperfect being, one who makes mistakes. Through acceptance of past mistakes and present fallibility, it appears that change is also possible, a seeming paradox. Yet all of the co-researchers recognize that they are the people who must undergo a difficult change in the attempt to enhance family functioning and self knowledge. Acceptance of one's limitations as a human can remove a block to change. Nicol's (1987) term "praxis" is appropriate. He defines praxis as the engagement of an active subject with her environment (p. 27). Through the increase in perceived self efficacy the women feel more powerful in re-entering the family group and are motivated to continue the struggle to alter parent/child relationships. Leslie says, "... I had so much changing to do ... I started applying it, and as I applied it little by little it worked .... So then I became a little more at ease and a little more comfortable with it because it worked." Change is thus worked out in interaction between the individual and the family group. If the family is to become a bonded unit that transcends the individual members, conscious participation is vital. The understanding and knowledge of the unique personal historical contexts that converge in a family unit, is a step leading toward increased understanding of self and others. The parent education group becomes a microcosm of what can be.

Considering the complexities outlined in this study, it is surprising that there have been positve outcomes in some parent education programs researched to date. The lack of more consistent positive outcomes could partially be because family relationships are not directly discussed in most group or individual programs. In all programs, although the theoretical basis may not be linear the teaching in the course is linear and expected to be passed from mother to children. It appears families do not have a linear way of functioning and the reciprocal implications and family context need to be considered.

Model of Praxis

The preceding discussion has focused on the parent education group experience as "praxis" of change. It is an interactional view of what happens and is a complex endeavor. A model of the parent education praxis is presented here as a guide to simplify understanding. The term praxis is now used, because from the complexities presented, it is apparent there is no necessary order of process. The process of taking the parent education course into a family is not a passive progression by participants but rather an active interaction.

felt need
openness to change
support and group belonging
skills and leadership
changed practices
family communication
family support
expansion of choices

The model presented is circular and as a parent reaches new parenting stages, it is repeated. However, whereas the group initially provides the support and sense of belonging, the family unit may be able to provide the support and belonging, due to increasing interaction.

Implications of Study

For Parent Education

Both the literature review and the results of this phenomenological study point to the complex nature of members in a group; both a parent education group and the family. This study demonstrates that the transition from group to family is difficult. All participants felt communication skills were a vital bridge to family practices. Each spoke of the benefits and usability of problem-solving techniques, "I" messages or "active listening" in the home. Perhaps all parent education groups ought to focus upon family communication by helping participants learn negotiation skills they can use in their homes and in the community. In addition, when only 1 member of a family is participating in a group, it may be useful to discuss how that one person can make impact and increase her efficacy when she re-enters the family. Actions hold implicit beliefs and when beliefs are discussed they become explicit and tend to fall more within the control of the individual. It may be possible to meet with each family unit once during the program to discuss the impact of the course in the home and to clarify the meaning of potential changed practices for participants.

Moreover, the women interviewed all feel that the group would change if men were participating. Spontaneous discussion of spousal interactions seemed to naturally arise in this all-women group. Yet the benefit of learning "male psychology" was also mentioned and the co-researchers could all see the potential benefit of fathers attending. Further, the group may be maximally beneficial if it helps the family support its members in the way the parent education group supports women. Spousal interactions could become an important part of the program with men included. Within the group, family acceptance of its members' unique views could be a focus as acceptance and change appear closely connected. Self-other reciprocity could thus be emphasized within the parenting group and parenting practices established within a family that can meet the needs of all members.

The therapeutic nature of the group is emphasized by the co-researchers. Acceptance, belonging and trust, all components of a helping relationship were stressed by participants. Many parent education groups, states Levinger (1979), avoid dealing directly with parents' emotional concerns and therefore stress educational rather than therapeutic aspects. Yet all participants, are undergoing emotional distress and receive assistance from the group. Often parenting groups address the fact that parents are there to help their children, yet it appears parental stresses may "block" the application of specific techniques. These stresses, belonging to males or females, could be more directly addressed in parenting groups and, while this may extend the time needed, would be more likely to insure long-term transfer of practices in the family.

Research

There has been research into the effectiveness of various parent education programs, however large gaps still exist which the current study has attempted to address. There are also very few longitudinal studies into parent education and little follow-through to assess impact in adolescence of a prior parenting course by the parents, or even to study the children of participants as adults. Study into these areas would add to understanding of families who attempt change. Neither fathers' nor childrens' reactions to their wives' and mothers' participation in such a group was considered in this study. As they are part of the system affected, their experiences may also add to understanding of family experiences resulting from a parent education course. Moreover, it is important to continue gathering personal experiences, so that program content is based on the needs of the people who are attending such courses. More often than not, the course curriculum follows an outline that may or may not be valuable for the particular group of participants. This study illuminates the process occurring in the home for the parent who is attending a parent education group, and finds that generally speaking, while the course offers content that is understandable and logical for participants, it is difficult to take such ideas into the home when family interactions are not altered. A family system is a co-constituted whole wherein parenting behaviours are part of the whole structure. As we gain understanding of the transition process from course to home course leaders can prepare programs to meet specific needs of parents and children.

Research into courses that extend beyond parenting per se and include parents' own stresses and emotional issues in the group would also be valuable for greater understanding. It appears that courses which ignore parents' personal issues are likely to meet with limited success. Exploration of the experiences of those who drop-out of such courses would also shed more light on needs not being met by the group. The meaning of the course for them could be very different and would reveal additional difficulties when transferring the content of the course into the family. The co-researchers in the current study were at differing developmental stages and ages. It would be interesting to analyze whether the present findings extend to other families with divergent backgrounds. It would also be valuable to analyze the experiences for single parents, those in a step-parent position or families who have a child identified by the outside world as a problem. Our understanding of the transition process from course to family in these families is almost non-existent.

Methodological Concerns

Phenomenological researchers hold that the general resides in the particular, (Weisgarber, 1988) and therefore sample size can be small. Yet this study seems only a beginning for studies of the multi-dimensional nature of family interaction and possibilities for change. There are limitations to the method. We do not know if behavioural changes could actually be observed "objectively" as different after the group course. Possibly this method could be combined with more "objective" measures to analyze changes and illuminate the convergence of the natural and human science methods. The open-ended interviews utilized here provide ample data for analysis; and I was not able to address all facets of the data. The method has allowed the essential structures of the experience to become explicit to change the natural attitude of this researcher. Interpretation takes place as themes are lifted from the data and these interpretations validated by the co-researchers. The themes are not preconceived but rather surfaced from the stated experiences, and each stage required a suppositionless (as much as is possible) reflection on the part of this researcher. The results became part of the ongoing debate over the phenomenon of parent education and its benefit to families.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study describes the experience of four women who are participating in a parent education course. Its intention is to understand the experience from the mothers' perspective, describe what happens in families as a result of such a group, and identify the processes that occur between group and home.

The descriptions given by the co-researchers indicate that past and present practices of both parents in a family, and their children, interact to impact the parent one is. While striving for what parents want to be, support is vital and change is slow. While the group met a personal need in all mothers, the families of the women were expected to change without consultation by the women. Yet, because family practices are not simply the function of one member but are mutually decided, verbal and non-verbal negotiation is necessary before family structure will alter.

Parent education programs must be attentive to the needs of parents as well as those of children for long-term success. Rather than parent education becoming self-validating for one member, it needs to become self-validating for the whole family system, and each member able to orient herself/himself as a person in the other's scheme of things. This is an interactional view of a family-being.

Outside information can be valuable to increase awareness and expand choices previously not available. However, once information is received, family members can negotiate how they can utilize such information within their system.

Fundamental issues remain to be investigated in the parent education field. Such investigations may lead to a comprehensive conception of parent education and improved psychoeducational programs for family members.

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APPENDIX A

APPENDIX A

Verbatim Transcript	Formulated Meanings	Numbered Meanings
I have a couple of friends that told me that if you take a course like that, you know, it doesn't apply in your life because it is too perfect, you know. But I don't find it myself.	You need to find out for yourself what works and what does not.	1
I find that it is, that's why I went back this year again, it's because, well, last year my girl was young and there is a lot of learning in this course, there is a lot, a lot, to learn and you cannot do it in one session.	Learning takes time and patience.	2
There is so much coming, you know, and last year was just to prepare myself to think this way with the kid because it was my first one and I was not used to being around kids very much.	Parenting takes conscientious effort.	3
	I feel quite anxious as a parent	4
So it has helped me so much. It was unreal.	I have really gained from the group, and have changed.	5
Even my husband is impressed with what you can get from a course like this.	My husband and I have discussed the course together.	6
Both of us, and for him, because at the same time he is learning. He is asking me questions and sometimes, if we have a problem with Irene as ...as...Okay, I go this way but it is not necessarily the best way. Your way can be good too, if we want to communicate with you. But sometimes, like	We are now communicating and deciding the way we want to deal with a certain situation. We are now more together thinking about issues.	7
	Communication is helpful to me.	8

power struggles; they all come eh, and he has a little bit trouble to deal with this. And we talked about it and I explained what the course suggests you know, and he has tried it too. At the beginning it works out really good but...you know, and so lately he has watched, he has tried it too and finds that it works too so he said,	I help my husband to try new ways.	9
"Well, I have to admit this is good".	He also feels positively about the course.	10
Oh yes, to change and to try to go get help from the outside.	I need support.	11
This is what I think is the most important, is to be a group.	Belonging to a group is the most important.	12
Because I took sessions before for me personally, but with what you do get for kids. All the parents are coming with their own experience and their own kids - they are all different of course - but they all tell how they approach problems, and of course having a kid that; she is younger than the kids of all the parents there so, I can say, "okay, this is coming" you know, prepare for a stage and they say	By hearing other parents talk about their experiences as a parent I learn about children and parenting.	13
what they did wrong and what they did good and you can... that's why you learn a lot.	I want to learn all I can as I'm an anxious mother.	14
Exactly. And then they start coming with whatever, if we have no answers for questions or...and she [leader] can say "Okay, I would try that".	We are all together in the group looking for answers.	15

Oh ya. No. I think this is the whole group and the instructor being in charge and leading all the conversations too and I think Shirley is very good too. She does not tell anybody what to do. She is more suggesting, people are coming up with solutions more.	It is vital to have a leader. The instructor guides us and gives us confidence.	16
We make the final decision.	The final decision is ours.	17
That has always been. We could feel that people were a bit waiting, you know, we didn't know if she would come up with all the solutions and that would be just great you know, and now everybody comes up with suggestions or "I tried that and it worked."	At first we were dependent on the leader and hope she would take all the responsibility.	18
	As we have taken the responsibility we have become more confident.	19
Oh, ya. If she thinks it isn't a good idea she doesn't say "No. I would not try it," but she uh, I don't know how to say it how she comes up with the, the, I don't know she comes up with something and you say, "Oh ya, it is better if I try something else." She'll never say that's not good.	There is acceptance in the group and nobody is put down for their ideas.	20
I cannot say that I come here and it is really a "want to try that." I'm more...having taken it last year it is more all there and I don't have to try one thing at a time. You know once you have the behaviour it is "I remember, Oh, ya, we talked about that and they suggested to go this way or tackle it that way. I don't really come here with the last course and try what was suggested. I do when it applies but no...I go with the whole thing. Ya, the	I can now think for myself about particular behaviours at home.	21
	Now that I've taken the whole course once I can integrate the bits into a larger picture.	22

whole concept. Ya. That's what I find. I find it more realistic, you know you come home with a course and you want to try what you have learned, you know it's more a way of living.	I need a foundation for living. I need a belief system.	23
And yourself so much. Well first it has to affect you and after it goes to your family.	The family changes after I change the way I do things. First is personal change.	24
Last year when I went for the course, it was more for me. I needed something after a year with her in the house I felt so empty like, and I had nothing else to do...so really I went there for myself. And this year it was for both of us. I would say.	Last year I was feeling dissatisfied.	25
	I needed the support to feel less lonely. The group has given me meaning.	26
Oh ya, and plus people around... the group is different, everybody around is different. That's why you learn other things you know.	I can learn something from everyone.	27
Last year he didn't really get involved a lot but...ya, it's good. No it didn't (create conflict last year) but it didn't do anything either. Like he was, "ya that's good, that's good, but..." I would say that the whole thing was mine. More mine. The house and the kids and everything was more my responsibility. He is getting more involved. Irene took him you know. She is kind of grabbing her father inside the house. He works a lot so it is difficult for him.	Now that the responsibility is shared I feel more support.	28
	I felt the pressure of responsibility last year.	29
	We are becoming closer.	30
Maybe I'm not nagging as much. I am not asking him, well you know, "We've decided to have a kid and now its more my kid than yours"	My approach has changed. I don't take all the responsibility for child rearing.	31

and you know the whole...I really felt it was my responsibility and maybe I was talking about it in the wrong way, asking in the wrong way.	Last year I felt pressure but not support.	32
Ya, you see it is a problem, a family problem. I could see that other mothers have this problem also because of the work of the husband or...so... the husband is not around or only on weekends.	The group has also helped give me support when I could not ask my husband because he was busy working hard for us.	33
	I was lonely and felt guilty.	34
Oh, ya, we do. Like last year I was wondering if anyone had this problem and there is another one in the group this session and it is the same thing. Like a pattern you know. We stay with the kids from 8:00 in the morning when they get up until when they go to bed so there is never anybody taking over during the day. There is never anybody to change the air, you know, so it makes it a little bit hard sometimes.	I can get very lonely being a mother to a young child and the group helps us all feel supported and support each other. We know how it can feel.	35
	I felt guilty wanting more than my child each day.	36
That would change the group (if husbands were included). It would be nice to have the husbands around or a few just to know their point of view or their sides, what they think...I don't have much male psychology because I grew up with only girls. So I am always happy to know what they think.	Fathers have a different outlook than mothers. Their view is interesting and we might understand each other better. But I feel more like the other mothers in the group than like my husband.	37
I had very good parents, ya. The only thing it is difficult for me is because I grew up with a large family, it was this, and not having anybody around like we didn't have any friends because we lived very far from everybody we played together we worked together	I was isolated as a child but isolated with a group with whom I belonged and felt secure.	38

as sisters and mother and father all the time except going to school, and there you couldn't exchange much. There was nobody else that could tell you I'm looking for the word, influence, there was not much influence. No TV, you know, I was nine years old when we got the TV. So all this for me I have to adjust to that.	Away from my family I did not feel very secure or confident.	39
You teach something to your kid or you would like to have some discipline and comes the TV comes the people around and all this and I say well you know, I have to adjust to that.	I am scared I won't have impact with my children.	40
Oh, ya. There was no violence, there was nothing like that. No spanking no nothing, you know, just working together.	I grew up with cooperation and shared responsibility in a closed family.	41
So it is a big adjustment.	My life changed outside my family and I feel insecure.	42
I find that it is very encouraging when you come back. Come back from the course. You feel like you have learned something. You know you can give because you are kind of energized and positively. You know.	Everyone is cooperating in the group and shares understanding. The group empowers me.	43 44
And you see that everybody is trying very hard to educate their children and also you see that others have more problems and that some have less, but you see that everybody is working hard on this, you know taking it seriously, which you know, I'm not so silly and overdoing it sometimes you think, "Maybe I overdo it."	Learning energizes. I feel accepted in the group. We are all wanting to do our best and need support.	45 46 47

I find it difficult (to talk about the same things outside the group). I find it difficult because it is like a religion or certain subjects you cannot discuss with some people. They	The group is accepting and offers support.	48
have their own ways and its... even if you don't have to say... it is okay because you can learn from each other but some of them are really strict you know.	In the group it is okay to say what we think.	49
"A course like this, it is nice but you cannot apply it in your own life, you know, it is not realistic." Well I find for myself it is just a tool and if you don't use it of course it won't do anything in your life. If you do use it, well it can help.	When you learn something you must be open to making it work. It takes practice and conscious effort.	50
But it is difficult sometimes with people. Lots of people don't really believe in this. They don't want to try, or they don't want to know about it.	There are individual differences in people and not everyone is open, and want to try.	51
Well they are scared its going to change their own habits. Their own, it's a security to always to do it the same way and they are scared of change, you know. They don't want	I understand that some people are afraid of change.	52
to change. Even if they have troubles, even if they have difficulties they prefer keeping this way.	I believe old habits feel secure even if they are not effective.	53
This is too bad because they come up with such problems, you know, that can be corrected, its just attitude or it is just the way you tackle.	We hold ourselves back from learning.	54
I used to tell it last year, communication, active listening, and all that. And I found out that I was not listening the right way.	There is a more effective way to do thing. And you need to be open to change.	55

No, not at all (feel guilty). I didn't know. No, I didn't feel bad. I was very happy	The group was not threatening to me.	56
to know that I could do better or if I could...that really improved the communication between my husband and I, and plus, I said "If I start using that now, it would be easier for the future with my children" so I was kind of trying everything on my husband too, you know.	I could practice the skills in other areas of my life.	57
Ya, because Irene was not talking. Such an age is more restricted you cannot try anything, you do but you don't have the feedbacks like at this age I know if I say something about my feelings, she will talk about it later or she will....	I have faith in the methods.	58
I would not say, well I kind of go there leaving all my...I try but sometimes probably I don't You know., I try not to take too much of my background or my beliefs with me so I can be open to the new ideas, and like I say I was not around kids very much. I knew so little how to tackle the...the physical aspects its easy I think everybody	In order to change you must try and suspend your biases.	59
can take care of a kid, everybody tells you you don't have to take a course because that's natural to be a mother, and after a while you say, "Maybe its natural but not for me." I just felt like I couldn't deal with anything because	I felt anxious about the non-physical aspects of parenting.	60
I was empty, like I was able to give all this physical needs ya, no big deal, but what about the rest? She is very sensitive and she can manipulate me very well with this and I was, "What do I do? Because I don't want to	I felt isolated and alone.	61

hurt her, well because I think its important to give her support, so I didn't know how to tackle this. These problems or whatever, they were not problems but I didn't want to make them problems. I don't think, I cannot think about what I was not prepared for, or I was against sometimes I don't agree with some of the people there, but not with the course itself. Ya, right. Last summer one of my friends came from Quebec, she is giving the same course in French. I didn't know this and I started to talk about it and, you know, how I liked the course and everything, and just, she said, "Well, I'm giving the same thing" because French and English...sometimes you don't see the same thing. She was using another title for the course and I brought her to one class and she was amazed. She was amazed at what we've got here ...at what we have, library and all this.	I need to be a good parent. I take my job as parent very serious. I need beliefs as they form the foundation and help me feel secure as a parent. There is a cross-cultural component to the course. It was like showing her my place of work and I was proud.	62 63 64 65
Oh ya, I do (think follow-up necessary). I don't think you can go there take the course, go away, that's it, that's all. It has helped you that's for sure for this time, but I think you have to carry on with something else...maybe another course or whatever you can do... you have to...because you are a human being, I don't know what it is, but we always have tendency to go back to our own ways and habits, the way we grew up. I think it is normal because, you know, we have done it for so long and	I work very hard to make changes and gains permanent. It is a struggle to maintain gains. I need meaning in my life. I want to do what I feel comfortable and secure doing. Change is difficult.	66 67 68

I don't think this is...maybe it was good at the time but we can't do the same thing. I cannot raise my girl on...whatever...the same way I grew up. No, you have to go get something else...the information or the ways, or you know. And there, I find that the course is the same but it has new things, new from last year, they add whatever they get from feedbacks I guess from the parents, so it is different. Not much, but enough that it is good for 1987. You know looking backwards with the course. It is important and I think we are so lucky to be in St. Albert we really have the best of all. The library, the tape, I borrowed a couple of tapes.	Times change and we must try and change with them. I need all the support I can get in our struggle to be a good parent.	69 70
Oh, ya, it is (the same ideas for everybody). It is, and like the tape, everybody around me has got that tape, because I thought it was a good tape and I just left it on the table and people coming here, we were talking and bringing problems, well I don't think it can help right away, but it may be they'll be interested in taking a course or you know, opening their minds to that. And it's not for...that I... want to sell that...but it helps. That's the main thing. I don't think I can do it myself.	I try to support others as I like to be supported. The course has given me a focus; a connection with others. I need help to grow and change.	71 72 73
I need some support and help from the outside to help me bringing the kid up. Like you go to University to learn your job or to college or whatever, and I think this is; I'm not saying this is a job...but	There is a constant pressure in parenting and I need help for this responsibility. I need support.	74

it is. A job you can do it and walk away but this you can't. You are here 24 hours a day and....	The course has given me meaning in parenting.	75
Ya, and this course makes me feel like that. Makes me feel like I do my best you know, I go get what is available for people to do better.	I get confidence and support for my job of parenting in a changing world.	76
Well that's funny (to ask about family interference) because last night I was thinking about that, you know and if you had your family around they'd be all coming and they say, "Well I wouldn't do that with my kid." I would imagine things like that...I was wondering how I would handle that, you know.	My family of origin might interfere with my job.	77
No. (that does not happen with my sister). She has older kids and bigger problems of course. So it goes like this; and I gave her the tape and copied, I bought a copy of the whole course and gave it to her and we talk about it, so every time we see each other we talk about it and I often have questions for her at the course, how to handle this or that, you know.	Parenting does not stop with young children and I need to talk with others all the time.	78
	The course has helped me connect with my sister also.	79
Ya, and I am learning from her too. Like she did...I won't say what mistake she did, some of the things that I was doing and it didn't work. Like if you say something, you mean it with the kids. You don't just blah, blah and nothing happening. And she was telling me that I am always bring that to her if you say something you do it. She said, "See I never noticed how much I was doing it" and now she says it doesn't work. Just talking	We learn from each other. Cooperating helps us to learn and gain support.	80
	As a parent you need to get fresh insight and become aware of what you do.	81

doesn't work. It has to have a consequence.		
Ya, hers (question authority) anyway. Because she's got older children.	As my children get older I will have new problems.	82
And she is a single parent. And it is with everybody if you always say, "If you don't do that this is going to happen," you know, and nothing happen, well....	All parents need outside input to become aware of what they are doing as a parent. We are all together.	83
As mine? I don't think so (husband as open). Ya, I am lucky for that. My husband is open to that.	Openness to change is important to me as it shows support.	84
It happened a month ago, when we...we really talked about it a lot. Like maybe I can talk about it, it is no big deal.	It is alright to talk about problems.	85
She had a problem with her training, like she was trained and everything and she got constipated and she had a little hurt, like she couldn't go to the bathroom without it hurting so she didn't want to go. But she didn't want to go in her pants. She was in between that. It was really hard on her. It was "I want to go" and then when I was going with her she didn't want to sit there.	Everyday problems need to be solved, but are difficult.	86
I didn't know what to do but I took her to the doctor to find out if it was a physical symptom or just a game, sometimes you don't know. It was.	The physical aspects of caring are much easier than to understand another person's world.	87
So anyway, in the meantime, Mike, he didn't know what was going on between her and I, said, "If you have to go you	Interactional difficulties affect everyone in the family.	88

go by yourself," and I put a little stool there so this way she would go, she would go and overcome the fear. Kind of, "I will be there to help you but by herself, eh. And during that he took her to the bathroom and it was time for her to go to bed and said, "You're going to go before you go to bed" and she would say "no" and they were kind of fighting over that, you know, and what I did bad, like I said, "Mike, that won't work, don't fight with her over that, it won't work" and that hurt him, like you know, "Can I try my own ways too?" and it was bad for me to interfere in front of her and just telling him this anyway. He was hurt and that night well the same problem happened and he said, "If you go in your pants I will spank you." He had never, never spanked her, never. But it was more between him and I. He was kind of mad at me or he was hurt.

Issues that begin with 2 people, can end with others involved. 89

And well she went in her pants maybe to defy him or to find out or...whatever, and he spanked her and, of course, I was against that. First, I am against spanking for whatever reason but it is my idea, and it's not necessarily the best but...it was hard for me to take but I stayed out of it as much as I could. I didn't say anything and he gave her a bath and he was kind of feeling bad about it too because he gave her a good one. Anyway, I couldn't

There are different ways to parent and these differences come together in a family. We need to negotiate how to parent. 90

talk to him until I was calmed down and he couldn't talk about it either. But we came after a couple of hours we sat down and we really talked about it. He said, "Well, it's no big deal it is just a spanking." You know, and he brought up the course, and he said, "Well you think with that course it is the only way that we can bring up a kid" you know, and I said, "I don't think so, but..."	There can be tension in a family created by child problems. We could talk them over. He felt a little defensive of his parenting and felt threatened by me.	91 92
You know, we talked about the different aspects and problems and after he said that, "I think you are right. I don't need to use that."	I now have a foundation about child rearing and a belief system that I am conscious of and can talk about.	93
It was just because there was the two of us. She got in there, not on purpose.	Problems affect all in the family.	94
But I felt confident about what I've got from the course, from the other people there, from Shirley, from the tape, you know, and I feel confident about myself, not 100% but at least I know there is this way and I am going that way instead of going 10,000 different ways and you never know what, you know, and you get so confused. I've decided to go this way.	I am more confident and secure in my position and feel the support of others in the course. I feel less confused.	95
To approach problems with, you know, thinking about it, or make the kid choose, or you know, more than ... just decide and it goes this way and that's it.	I want to be flexible in my approach to my daughter; to parent consciously.	95
And the conclusion of this was good, because we really talked you know. We opened all the...	We cooperated to solve this problem. We became closer.	96
Before, I am sure I would have said, "That's the way, I think. I've never been spanked and that's it!" And you know, I	I have become much more flexible and we can support each other.	97

don't think this is good to, like, I don't think Mike would have said anything, probably "Okay," and that's it.		
But he could tell me his point of view too and the way he grew up too, a part of it, and you know, because I think men are difficult to approach or to open when it is time to talk about children, and I don't know if they're all like this but, I find them more difficult.	As a family we now discuss the different ways of thinking. I can now discuss things easier with my husband.	98
Especially when it is time to talk about the emotions, the feelings, and all that. Ya, they don't open so easily.	I now feel more secure when talking to my husband about feelings.	99
Ya, and he is helping me, too. Like I said I don't have very much male psychology, so... you know, its, I say, "Oh, he thinks different than I."	We need to understand each other, and to support each other.	100
Socially it is good (the group). Ya, I met Jane last year, it is nice because we are friends now, she's a close, close friend now, its appreciated. And it's a security of mine. I feel secure having this,	I needed to connect with others.	101
if I feel like...I have another kid coming I don't know how I am going to tackle some of the involved, also having this kid coming into our lives. We have kind of set things up between	I am anxious about the addition of another family member.	102
the three of us and there is a fourth one coming, and I feel I can always go to the parenting place and talk with whoever, plus we have all the instructors and people that, you know they know more than	The family will change when another child is born.	103
I, and they have more experience, and they have met people with problems. So I know I can go there and I know	I feel more secure when there are others who understand my feelings.	104

I am going to have good advice. I am going to have good, you know	I feel confident in the leaders to help me feel less anxious.	105
Yes. You know, I feel more secure I know they are there. They are like a doctor, or... somebody you can see when you go there. Not for everything. You always try by yourself to do, you know, but it is somebody there just for talk. A course.	I need that security to give at home. I need support. I trust them.	106 107 108
Last year I asked them to have a "suive," something that can go after that course, and they were saying that there was another one coming but it is more for, like last year, I would have taken the one they put this year. It was more for a one year old, you know, this toddler. But this year Irene was a little too old, so I decided to take the same because it was more in general.	I want to continue learning about my parenting job.	109
Ya, right. It is impossible to get absolutely everything the first time because so much, and also sometimes a different way of talking or thinking... expressing the 'I' message. I just don't think you can get it like this. Impossible. The active listening and the 'I' messages those are the ones that they were somewhere but I couldn't understand the whole thing or apply or use it. It was too much.	Sometimes the course makes me very conscious of looking at, or thinking of things a different way. When I first heard some of the concepts they did not fit with what I already had in my head. You need to understand the whole concept to use it.	110 111
The change, I really think you can't change things in one day or ...	It is difficult to change even when you want to.	112
No. I don't expect that. I've been doing things for so long. When we decided to change it goes fast; as changing. Okay,	We first have to become conscious that we want to change before we begin to.	113

"I don't want my life to stay like that," or, "I don't want my life to continue this way," so the day you are sincere and you really want to do it, you start changing but, but the changes are gradual, that's what I think. As long as you keep that in your mind, that you want to change, whatever.	And even when you want to change it is difficult.	114
There is a lot (in the course). Even if you don't have kids you can take the course, and for your own growth it would do a lot.	The course may be a parenting course but I change in all areas of life. My way of interacting with others.	115
Because you always have to do it for yourself because you give it to somebody else. And I think if you try to do it on somebody else and it is not integrated it doesn't do the same thing.	Before I can be sincere with others I have to understand the wholeness; the whole concept in all parts of me.	116
Ya. Also the first year kind of prepared the ground, you know. Sometimes, like you decided that you want to change whatever, a lot of things...and you don't know what but you say, "It doesn't go the way I want. This year its more like the ground is already prepared so I can put seed in it. Last year was more "Okay, where do I want to start ..."	I first need a foundation to build on.	117
	Before change takes place there must be a tension, a feeling that things must be different.	118
		119
Ya, probably from having grew up on a farm.	My background is inside you.	120
I was feeling really lonely.	I felt isolated before the course.	121
I thought like parenting...I knew that it would not be so easy, every day, but I guess I didn't know you could give, give, give, and get so empty. Like where do you get your, what you need to fill your family with? You know, at home.	I didn't get much feedback at home about the job I was doing, and the pressure is unrelenting. I felt empty.	122

Ya, if you don't work outside your first year you don't have the social life, it's difficult for that, so where do you get all your energy? You know, you must have a lot if you want to keep up like that.	When I have a young child child at home I am very isolated. I felt very alone.	123
They do, and also they get your weaknesses too. They always, it seems to get where they always bring back in their behaviour what we find...and we say, "Yes, we have to deal with this."	Children bring out my insecurities.	124
"What can we do with this? With what?" "Do I take a course? or other people?" You can maybe	Outside help is useful to help me feeling more confident.	125
talk about this weakness you can work on it and it doesn't become a weakness anymore...you know, you can just handle it.	I am now confident. I can get support.	126

Verbatim Transcript	Formulated Meanings	Numbered Meanings
O.K. Well, I found the course, uh, the course, the classes that I was able to come to, I found very interesting. I found the information was excellent.	I learned some new things in the classes.	1
I, myself, I got a lot out of it. But it is very hard to go home and immediately apply that information. It's something that doesn't come natural.	It is difficult to apply new ideas.	2
It's something that you have to stop and think about because you've been doing it a certain way for so long. I'm a very spontaneous ... uh, very impatient, short-tempered type of person. So when one of my children get into a battle of minds, the instant thing isn't, Oh, gee, you know, turn to page 21 and let's see what it says.	It takes a lot of conscious effort and you're trying to overcome what comes naturally.	3
I instantly react ... and then think about it later and say, "Well gee," "you know," "there was another way of handling this." And a lot of it I learned in the class.	Sometimes I act first and think later. But the course gave me something to think about.	4
Uh, I got a lot out of it but like I said, it's hard to go home and apply. And another thing too I found it's hard taking, just one person taking the course when you are two people raising a family, you know.	It is difficult to re-enter the family and just change practices.	5

Uh, I can go home and try and explain all I can to my husband and it never comes out the same way, it seems, as it does in class.	It is difficult to communicate to my husband exactly what I mean.	6
And uh, you know, he can't apply that information because he's getting it second hand. He doesn't quite understand what's all the background to this information. I can just tell him, "Well, when so and so reacts like this, do this," and "Well, why?"	I wanted him to just do the things but he wanted a reason.	7
"Well I don't know why, just do it," you know? And so I find that very hard.	I became frustrated trying to convince him when I wasn't entirely sure myself.	8
We sat down and we talked about it, not in great length, but we did talk about it and he did sort of flip through the nights that I was doing the shows, he flipped through the uh, the book and he found some of the ideas really really good. He found, but again there's not that much explanation in the books ... so ... um, well it's sort of the handout that we followed through the parenting course	We talked a little, but I couldn't give him the background information he wanted. He wanted a rationale for the techniques.	9
So uh, but it's, you know, like I said, it was interesting.	So we didn't apply very much in our family.	10
Um, well I don't really know much more to say. I found we, well it's easy to get into a lot of discussion and you could be here for hours.	In the group, ideas can be really talked about and discussed. There is a lot of dialogue.	11
In the course, ya. And you know, uh, "But it's", "it's," "I got," like I	I felt a little distant and unfamiliar with the content of the course.	12

said, I got a lot out of it. I thought it was interesting. Uh, their method was, you know, get to the root of the problem rather than just react or		
Um hmm, um hmm. You know, "why did?" "there's gotta be another reason why this ..." And we see this more and more now, you know, because we're a little bit more aware of it. We do see some of the problems that we've had before; if you go, if you backtrack, you can sort of figure out, you know, why there is a problem, where it's coming from, and why the child is reacting that way.	Being aware of looking at a problem the way the course suggests is helpful. You have to stop and go back to figure out why. It gives you a structure to look at problems.	13
So again it's just retraining yourself ... to think that way, you know. It is hard to do that, ya, if it's something that doesn't come natural to you ... you know, uh ...	This is all new to me and to learn this approach is very difficult.	14
No, I got from the impression (that it is hard to do) from most of the girls ... actually some were very much into it. Like they'd come to the next class and really talk about a situation that they ... they ... uh, handled the ... you know sort of the way it was expressed in the book	I didn't share the same feelings as some in class. Some really worked at this and could apply the ideas at home.	15
or in class, and ... uh ... for some it came really hard, like it was very hard ... Others, it, you know, it sort of came easy to them.	People were at different levels of readiness and some could really apply the concepts. I found it difficult.	16

But the thing is too, you've got to be honest with doing it, you know, you can't just ... because it's just like in that tape, which I have, that Barbara Coloroso tape. She says, "Well, gee, I wonder what course Mom is on now" or what, you know? Something's that's gotta come with sincerity also.	I need to understand the reason for what I am doing, not just apply techniques.	17
Well, maybe experiences in the class, I found, or in the course, I found some of the other ladies were, you certainly do begin to realize you're not alone, you know, and the problems that you have with your kids aren't just you and your kids. A lot of other people have the same problems, some worse, some not so worse, so ...	The group gives support and it is a relief to know others share the same problems as a mother.z	18
Exactly, ya, (people at home are used to certain reactions) and I am the, the authority at home. You know, I'm the disciplinarian, I'm the, you know, because my husband is in construction, he's gone a lot...	The discipline is my responsibility because I'm at home more.	19
Um, it's hard for him to walk in the door after being gone two days and then, you know, "so and so needs to be disciplined." "Well, gees, give me a break. I just walked in the door. I'm really kind of happy to see them, you know."	My husband wants to enjoy the children when he sees them, not discipline them. I tried to get him to discipline them more.	20
In the meantime, I'm pulling my hair out but um, so usually,	Parenting can be very frustrating and I'd like to share the frustrations.	21

like I said I'm the one who does most of the disciplining at home so the course was good for me but there again it's hard when there's two people raising a family and you're both doing it different.	Even though I do most of the disciplining my husband has an opinion also. Sometimes we disagree on how to parent.	22
You know, all of a sudden I can be gung-ho about all of this and try and do all these things and if the other person isn't following through.	My husband wasn't just following my lead. He could sabotage what I was doing which is frustrating.	23
Um, it makes it really hard so my, my personal opinion to this course would be I really honestly feel it should be, if you're two people raising a family it should almost be compulsory that both people come. Because you can create a lot of other problems with, you know, I mean the husband can have the same reaction. "Well, what course are you taking this month?"	The leader could maybe convince my husband. He is defensive with me. We have trouble negotiating differences.	24
Well not necessarily that he'd want to deal with it another way. More so, "why?" You know, "why are we doing it this way, or what are we gonna get out of it," uh....	He wants a rationale and will not just do something to support me.	25
Ya, exactly. Umm, I don't know, I guess, I guess if you communicate really well and you can sit down and really discuss it, uh, maybe you can get the point across, uh, just, you know, one coming to the course. But we did, like I said, we did sit down and talk about it. But again it's hard to pick up everything that goes on in the class and then go	It is frustrating trying to communicate about the course. I cannot convince him and that is frustrating.	26

home and say You know, this is this, this, this, and this and the whole bit.		
Uh, one of the things I found that really worked and I don't remember how, what the name of it is, but the type when your child walks in the door and says, "I hate my teacher." And you say, "You really hate your teacher?" Uh .... I can't remember what that name of that is	The course did help me communicate with my child more effectively.	27
Ya, (active listening) it's one of those. And I found that very interesting because we have a daughter, an 8 year old, that comes home every day and that's ... you know ... "and I used to always say "Oh no, you don't hate your teacher," or "if you wouldn't be such a miserable little brat in school, you wouldn't hate your teacher," you know. That's not what she wanted to hear	I used to try and convince my daughter she was wrong. Now I empathize with her and we do communicate better.	28
You know, and uh, I found that very very ... and I never even thought of it, you know. It just wasn't something that would, that came natural to me. I never thought of it. You know, I just, that wasn't my train of thought. My train of thought was trying to change her mind.	When I become aware of something that makes sense I can apply it. I can consciously do something different to what I naturally would do.	29
And uh she is a very, very uh, oh, I don't know how to, I don't really know how to explain her. (laughs) Very stubborn ... And actually her and I are very, very much the same character, so of course ... you notice all	Before we would just each take a stand. Now it's a relief to say something that doesn't start a fight.	30

these things ... oh boy, ya. So I found that to be super. Um, that active listening or effective listening ... one or the other, anyway. That was really good because I used that quite a bit.		
And I find when I make that comment she opens up. And just tells me what she feels and I don't make any comment, you know. Like I just ... "OK." "If this is the way you feel, ok., fine." And then later if she wants to talk about it or bring it up, fine, then we can sort of hash out what the problems are, you know, make it so that maybe it's not all just the teacher, and so that has really worked.	I can now communicate with my daughter in a way that doesn't make her defensive. It is more peaceful.	31
And my husband actually understood that one really well. He said, you know actually that makes an awful lot of sense, just repeating basically the same thing that she said.	Both my husband and I agreed that the technique for listening was reasonable, so it could be applied.	32
And it works very good on adults too.	I can apply that technique or skill in other areas as well.	33
That was super. I was just trying to think which was another one. (pause) I think that was the one that, that really sticks in my mind, ya.	That was the one thing in the course that was helpful because I could use it. Nobody resisted.	34
I've got um, well my brother lives with us. He's 22. He room and boards with us. I've got a sister here. And another sister in Leduc and the rest are all in Hinton. Well actually the sister took the course with me.	I belong to a large family who support my efforts to be an informed parent and to get outside help.	35

So, you know, I can't say that there was, you know, there's no problem there (with family). Actually if anything, uh, like I spoke to my mother-in-law or I should say my husband's family all lives here too. My family, and my husband's family all lives here too. And I, you know, like I told my mother-in-law I was taking this course and we talked about it naturally, you know. Actually I got nothing but good comments, or you know, nobody was trying to say "Oh well, you know, what are you doing that for," or "we're gonna need more than that" or whatever the case may be.		
So um, see 'cause I took my 8 year old to a ... uh ... I don't think she is a psychologist but she works in Mental Health. Mary is her name. I don't know whether she's just a counsellor or whatever. Um, I didn't get as much out, I didn't get as much out of it there as I did here.	I have searched for help in the past. I have problems with my daughter.	36
Um, I don't know why. Maybe I wasn't ready for it or I, nothing really stuck in my mind other than basically I was told that my child had a behavioural type problem.	A person has to be ready to change or it won't happen.	37
So that's ok. to get, to realize what the problem is but then you know, how to deal with it.	I needed techniques and a structure to make changes.	38
So some of the things in the course I did find, I did sort of understand...well another one that was really	It was difficult to understand the rationale for doing some things.	39

important is how you talk to your child. You know?		
They're a person just like you are and always being told, told, told, told all the time ....Which I do, uh, I get ... I fight the system too and I'm sick and tired of being told and	I rebel and came to realize my children are separate people who may also rebel. Power is important to me.	40 41
That made me realize, you know, when somebody finally put it, pointed it out to me that, you know, that they're sick and tired of it too. They get told in school, they get, you know, told if they take some sort of sports, or ... whatever, and then they get the same stuff at home. So that was interesting too, because I, now when I do speak to them I realize, you know, well I wouldn't want to be spoke to that way either, you know.	Through dialogue with others I became more aware of my children as separate people who also need to feel they have impact.	
Ya, ya. Well I can't say I do it all the time because I do lose my cool but ... I would say 90% of the time I stop and I think first. Um, I don't spontaneously react as much as I used to. Simply because you know, you've got new ideas. And just in your way of looking at the situation, at kids, you know. From the course, ya. From the course. Ya. I thought, I've got nothing but good to say about the course.	New ideas help me become aware and if I have new ideas I can consciously think about them. The group participants gave me new ideas.	42
Oh, I think it's important to have the leader there.	I need a person there to trust as the authority.	43
Ya. I would say other people ... other people's experiences are, are, were very important, very	Hearing other people's experiences is helpful and gives me ideas.	44

enlightening. Uh, how other people handle situations, um, no I think it's important.		
I think it's good to have the group, but also have the leader there also.	The leader is important as is the group.	45
Well, ya, exactly, like the hand-out is, was in sort of point form, and a lot of times you've gotta put a situation to uh ... like I mean you can make a comment on well, "when your child reacts like this you should do this" sort of thing. Or this is a suggested idea. You know, you read that thing over and over again and say to yourself "well, it just doesn't make any sense. That kid's not gonna get anything out of that."	If something doesn't make sense to me I don't apply it. Reading the information doesn't work by itself.	46
Until you put a situation to use and you know, look it over and uhhh then you can begin to realize, you know, what's gonna happen.	Sometimes I can trust that something will work and do it. I'll then be able to predict the outcome the next time. I see that behavior.	47
Or, ok. ... Hmm. I guess (whether the course created conflict at home) it would depend on the type of person you and your spouse are. You know, if you've got a good communication, um, no, or if somebody is fairly open-minded.	Open communication and an open-mindedness are important if I am going to take the ideas into my home and have all the family respond.	48
No, I can't see any problem. But if you're, if, if, o.k. for instance, the situation if the husband is the authority at home and the wife comes here, takes the course, and then tries to go home and change things I could probably see some sort	The ability to take the course ideas into the family depends on family structure and who is bringing in the information.	49

of conflict there.		
But in general, no. I think it's, as long as a person is open-minded and willing, I mean if you're to the point where you realize something has to be done to change the way you're reacting to your children or your children are reacting to you, that's why you came here and you should be open to suggestions. So, I think, I don't really think that unless a person is looking for this, I don't think they'd come. I really don't, you know, "why?"	I knew I had to change and therefore I came into the group open-minded and ready to learn new things.	50
Well, I don't know, I feel that if, if um if you're willing to come to a course like this, obviously you're looking for something and you're open to ... You know, because all you do is you take out of it what you want. And shelve the rest for later, possibly or whatever. You know.	I only use what I want. want. The decision as to what to use is up to me.	51
No it was quite different (in my family). I mean we were a large family. We were 11 of us. So I mean we were a large family and my mother is from a family of one other brother. So... It was a pretty hard situation for her. Um, I think it would have done them a world of good to have something like this, to look at, you know, because they make comments now as to ... um ... more communication.	Good communication can help a family. My family of origin did not have good communication.	52
Where, over, back at that time it just wasn't, you know. Like because they'll	Learning about communication also taught me to see things from the	53

make comments now "Well, gee, if I would have only known how that child felt at that age maybe we could have done something more or," you know "whatever," and I don't find that, at least from what I remember communication was never really stressed. Or, you know, you communicated, or you didn't sort of thing.	child's point of view which my parents didn't do.	
And I imagine with 11 people, sometimes a lot of communication would have, you know, would have been too much, but um ... I think they did pretty damn good ... for 11 kids and all of them have turned out pretty decent so ... Oh ya, Well, I, I look at just the three I have and ... I really wonder some days how that woman did it and I mean she only weighs 90 pounds, and she's got a waist about that big, how she did it!	In my large family we couldn't think of enhancing anything. It was a matter of survival.	54
You know, because I remember when my two girls were ... um ... 2 and 3, I guess would have been about the worst ... I, oh, I'll tell ya, I wish I would have had a course back then.	It is very frustrating to have 2 young children and I needed support as well as ideas.	55
That is more important, I think, back then, than hitting them at the age of 7 and 8. Ya, oh ya. Because the, especially being the type, this is the type of person, speaking from my point of view, because I am very spontaneous, I react very quickly, I ... I react and then think about it after. If I would ... and then they're trained to that. They are trained to	Change is very difficult. The children have their patterns of reacting too and we all have to change.	56

that. If I would put some of the stuff I'm putting to use now when they were 2 or 3, I'm sure it would be a lot simpler ... to deal with matters or, because they react spontaneous now.		
You know, they react exactly the way I do. You know, and I can see it and I, you know, many times I've said God if I could only turn the clock back and, and get rid of all these bad habits.	I feel guilty that I've reinforced patterns I don't like now.	57
And start over again, uh, I think that, I think, or I wish, the course I would have taken when my kids were 2 or 3 years old. Rather than ... being 7 or 8 cause they've already picked up all your bad habits and boy they're hard to change. I mean you find it hard to change yourself. And (cough), pardon me, it's hard for the kids to.	Change is hard for myself and it's hard to change my children's reactions.	58
Oh, guilty to a degree (when it seemed too hard) and then I thought "With all the garbage you guys put me through, no, I don't feel guilty at all." "You deserved everything you got." You know? Like, I mean there was always that twinge of guilt there, but then I always ... I ... because I had it tough.	I may not have always reacted correctly but parenting has been difficult and I can justify how I reacted. I do feel guilty.	59
Those two kids, when they were 2 and, well right from the time the second one was born, the oldest one was a colicky baby right till she was 11 months old. And the next one was born a month later. And uh, life was hell.	When my children were young I had tremendous pressure on me.	60

I'll tell ya, you know, all of a sudden, you're, you're a new mom and uh I still enjoyed my time, my going out in the evenings, once in a while, on the weekends, or whatever ... and those kids, they were the type of kids they were up at 5 in the morning and couldn't get them to bed at night. And uh, I resented ...	I had a difficult time adjusting to parenthood. They were always there and I needed some space.	61
A lot, and I had those guilt feelings but I, it always seems to be that other things that twigs and says, "Those little suckers deserve whatever they got, you know."	I feel guilty but I can justify my reactions.	62
Because there's something, you know, being the type of person that I am, I can't stand a mother that takes and takes and takes and takes and takes, especially if they're in my house, you know, that just goes on and on, like with the patience never runs out. I could slap her, never mind the kid. I really could because, you know, I've seen how fast I react and I realize that's no good. But you can also go overboard the other way. You know. So it's just a matter of finding that medium, you know. Or, or that ... but you know, cause some people, I don't know where they get their patience from but ... it drives me absolutely wild.	I have trouble accepting people who are very patient with children. I get angry. I feel like I'm at the other end of the continuum. They should change too.	63
There's nothing wrong with patience. I ... to me, I think it's ... you know, it's a very good trait.	I wish I could be more patient.	64

Mind you, I find I can be a little bit, um, I'm always thinking that next step. You know, I'm assuming what their next step is. Which I am usually 99% right what they're going to do. That's where, that's the actually the only time my husband and I conflict is; I know their next move because I am with them a lot, you know a lot more than he is. And I anticipate their next move so I prepared myself. Like, you know, I'll tell them as they're going down the hallway, they're supposedly going to the bathroom, and I'll warn then and say "Don't go in the baby's bedroom." You know, he says, "Why are you always telling them that?" I say, "Well, you know, they're hauling that kid out of there five minutes after I lay her down with her bottle." You know, I already know what they're going to do.	I react according to my expectations. My husband doesn't like that and says so. I feel resentful when my husband questions my parenting.	65 66
And uh, you know, so it's just little things like that where some people, it's just, their patience drives me crazy. You know? It's just gone too far.	I'm not patient. I think others should change.	67
Um, I was very pleased, unfortunately I couldn't come to all of them but I had, you know I had other things I had to get done too and I went away for 2 weeks while the course was on, I went to Ft. McMurray. So I kind of, it was sort of planned before I had decided to take the course and I'm not one who always thinks, I don't plan my days. Things	I don't like to plan everything. I'm impulsive and do not want others predicting my behavior.	67

come just as they come. Like I'm not a planner. And uh, well it just happened that I went to Ft. McMurray at the time the course was on.		
But my sister did relate, you know ... oh ya, she kept coming. Ya, and she did relate some of the things, you know ... that I, things that went on and stuff like that. And like I said, the booklet is always a good reference to ... you know, we can sit back and, being that I've been to some of the courses ... I know they're ... or at least I have an idea of the general ...	I am interested in ideas and I have a sister that helps me and gives me support.	68
I think the, also the Barbara Coloroso tape is, that should be, that tape should be stressed a little bit more. I find that's a super ... and that's something that two people can sit down and listen to at home. I really enjoy her, her outlook.	A tape is something I can take right into the family and is easy to understand and can be shared with my husband. He might listen to her.	70
I think it, I don't know, at least I have noticed in parenting, it all depends on how you feel about yourself, how much confidence you have, how much self esteem you have, and if you are, you know, you feel pretty good about yourself, you like yourself.	Self acceptance affects parenting.	71
I think you're going to do a pretty good job or the best job that you can do. In whatever you take on. Whether it be parenting or a new job or whatever.	I want to be a good parent.	72

And I think getting down to the root, even more importantly of maybe giving you new ideas of how to, you know, raise children .... Go back a few more steps and get to know yourself, why you react, you know ...? Because ... and how I really noticed this was I was finding some of the things that my 8 year old was doing, I saw myself in her, and I could have just strangled her. You know, I really did, because, I thought she is in some ways so much like me and I hate that part of myself. You know, that it was scaring me and you know, you start, and of course with the new type of career I started which is very high positive. Very uh, you know, confident building, self esteem, reading Zig Ziegler and people like that ... You know, you get a better feelings of yourself and I think anything you can take, anything you take on, you always will look at the bright side you know. That's right. It's how much ... it all depends ... or at least my opinion is, it all depends on how much self esteem you have about yourself and	Many issues impact my parenting and I need to understand me and accept myself before I can accept my children. I need to know I am worthwhile as a person and a parent.	73 74
because I see that situation with my sister and I, and you know we're raised the same, but she has a real chip about the way she was raised.	My sister and I have different perceptions of early experiences.	75
And she's doing the exact same thing to her kids. She's raising her kids exactly the way we were	It's difficult to change even if you want to change.	76

raised. But yet in the meantime she is totally calling down the way she was raised. Mind you she was two, second oldest ... in the family. Uh, I have a completely different outlook. I feel I was pretty, I was raised pretty damn good for as many kids as we were and I was the hellion in the family, so I can you know, I, I just have a complete different outlook. But her self esteem is really, really low. Her self confidence is really low.	I feel guilty about the way I treated my parents.	77
And I see the difference now in how she reacts to her kids, how she treats her kids and, you know, some of the psychological damage you can do. And uh, I think it all boils down as to how you feel about yourself. Ya, I, I really at least I believe that. And I feel, I feel if you feel good about yourself and you have confidence in what you're doing, nobody can ask ... anymore from you, you know. But if you don't really like yourself and that, how can you properly raise somebody else.	When I feel bad about myself, it affects my children too.	77
I think so (address self-esteem in the groups). I think it would be a very important factor if instead of just looking at, you know, raising your children a little bit more find out why, why you're, why you're even needing the course like this. You know. Why do I feel I have to come here? Obviously I, I don't have much confidence in myself.	If I are going to change the way I parent, we have to address our own issues and why I am not confident.	78

At least, that's what I'm saying, this is my opinion. You know. But; or I'm not doing something right, so let's start working on me first. Or do it together, whatever. How you feel about yourself and the way you portray that to other people.	Change affects everyone in the family.	80

Verbatim Transcript	Formulated Meanings	Numbered Meanings
We have two weeks left so we have done eight. And I have been to all of them. Ya, it starts at 9:00. I have one off to school by then anyway and the other little guy is looking for somewhere to go, something to do, anyway so. Ya, he goes into the babysitting. Oh, he likes it. Ya, he is quite happy. I was a little bit concerned because I thought if he knew I was in the same building he might be wanting me but he is fine in there and he is one of the older ones; he just turned five. But there is another little boy in there about the age age, so... he just loves it. I have a hard time getting him out.	My son is very aware my presence. I am quite connected to my son.	1
Ya, it is because he likes to be busy. When he's at home with me, he is the type that he wants me to be doing things with him all the time so if we do things together and go out, it helps.	My son seeks my attention and I need relief from that.	2
Oh, I've enjoyed it (the course). Ya, I really have. I read a lot of the books that are mentioned in the course. Ya, I have. *Children: The Challenge*, and you know a few on the same line.	I am a very conscientious parent.	3
I've read the *PET* book, and I agree a lot with what is in the books but it is very hard to put it into practice because it doesn't come naturally and with the course, it reinforces it	It is difficult to read a book and put it into practice. A book is distant and questions cannot be answered.	4

more. I find it. Because you discuss it more and techniques of using it, not just reading that you should do this, you should do that; it sort of teaches you more how to do it, how to put it into practice.		
I find, and you hear how other people are using it and doing it and how some people post it on their fridge like some of the encouragement phrases and things like that. It is just sort of to make yourself use them more, you know. It is on your mind more I find than just reading a book.	A group has a motivating influence.	5
Ya, I think it is great and I especially like going on a Tuesday morning as opposed to an evening because it is all moms. I think when the dads are there too I think it is good for the dads to go to these courses, I think they get a lot out of it too, but I don't think people open up as much; I think they feel more restricted.	We all share the same feelings as mothers and can empathize with each other.	6
Ya, which I think I would too. Well, like, in this course we have a good time, we laugh a lot together but also a lot of them draw into problems with the spouse, you know, like they say "Gee, I used that on my husband this week and it worked" which, I know, which I can identify with. You know, like some of the encouragement and problem-solving techniques and, you know, things like that.	We share parenting issues as well as relationship issues concerning our spouses.	7

And you know of course if the spouses were there nobody would be inclined to open up like that. Into family problems.	Problems we have are family problems. We learn how to deal with family problems.	8
And a lot of the problems that come up too are "what do you do when your husband is in conflict with a child?" and that sort of thing which, you know, might come up if they are all there, but it probably wouldn't.	Men think differently than women.	9
Ya, I think so. I think mothers in general are inclined to hover over the family and want to set everything straight and I think I am also one that would want to interfere.	I tend to take a high amount of family responsibility.	10
If I see something not being done right or not the way I would handle it I would want to jump in and say "Don't do it that way!" Which I have done, you know, Ya, where now I am more inclined to stand back and let them solve their own problems and then maybe if I feel inclined, if it is serious enough, I will speak to him later about what took place. But I don't interfere in it anymore.	I am a person who would like things to be perfect. With the course our communication has changed. I am more aware of my actions and words.	11
Well, it is hard sometimes not to, you know, because I have done all the reading and I have taken all the courses and I feel that I am more "in tune" with the kids of course I am with them more, and I feel that I know more about how to handle some things that he does.	Change is difficult, especially when you believe you have understanding. It is difficult to let go. I want my husband to deal with the children my way as I have been consciously searching.	12

He will come out more from just instinct; he will just react; where I no longer react like that. I think more - I think first - before I react and it is through all this parenting course.	Instincts are not good enough when raising children. I believe you must plan when dealing with children. The course has presented a method and plan.	13
That's right, if something is bothering him he will let people know, he is more inclined to yell at them to stop it, especially if they have friends over and they are making a racket and you know, tearing the house part, you know, that sort of thing, I will just handle it in a more calm manner than he will. He would just throw everybody out.	Our ways of raising children are quite different. He is more emotional and impulsive where I am more rational now.	14
Where I will try to solve the problem - deal with it - and get people to act the way they should, pick up, deal with the problem kind of thing.	I believe there is a right way to handle issues.	15
Ya, I think before I went into the course I knew right from wrong from reading the books and that sort of thing but ... but taking the course, I think it has made a difference in how I ... it reinforces what you believe in ... and it stops you from reacting.	The beliefs presented fit with my beliefs and now I feel more right.	16
Ya, it is more on your mind. You know, I think possibly after you leave the course you have to be careful again because you are not ... it is not on your mind as much. Ya, sure, it is the same as reading a book. You know, every so often I will pick up a book on parenting ... a different one. .. Your	Being in a group helps you to do what you believe in. It motivates you.	17

Child's Self Esteem is another rally good one I've read ... and it brings you back in line with what you know is right and why you are reading the book and why you are taking the course ...		
You are aware but a few months down the road you can go back so easily to old ways. Even though you know.	It is very difficult to change even when you believe in certain methods.	18
Well...I don't know...you know it is instinct. You know, I read one time and I do believe it, that you will parent as you have been parented unless you make a conscious decision not to...unless you know better kind of thing.	How we have been parented is inside us. We need to be conscious of what we want to do.	19
Which I do know better but you know it is still instinctive to act the other way...the wrong way. authoritative, I guess.	The way you were parented becomes instinct. My instinct is wrong.	20
Right. Ya. It goes against everything that is in the parenting course or in the books now, it is more a democracy type...you know.	Everything I have read or taking in my search, says my instinct is wrong. I felt very insecure with my natural way of parenting.	21
My family was a very authoritative type of family, dictator, expectations, criticism ... more negative than anything positive.	My family or origin did not provide me with a method of parenting I believe in. I felt I did things wrong as a child from the responses I got from my parents.	22
Where with my kids that is one thing that I always tried to do is make sure that there is more positives in a day than negatives, you know, for as many times as you get angry	I did not want to raise my children as I was raised.	23

with them, you are going to hug them twice as much kind of thing in my mind to balance that. Boy, I wasn't raised that way, no.		
I moved around quite a bit as we grew up. Transferred. I was born in the prairies, Winnipeg, and ended up out in Toronto area and even since we've been married, we've moved around quite a bit, transfers. We just moved from Toronto about a year ago.	I have been lonely for a considerable amount of my life.	24
I think we all really enjoy each other while we are there but we haven't really gone beyond that. But I find the last few classes we all know each other and it is nice to go into the same class with the same people.	The group offers support and we feel comfortable with each other.	25
There's some that open up more than others, of course, in anything, and I find there is a couple ... the ones with the young children don't have as much input, I think just because they haven't experienced a lot of what we are talking about. Anybody that has kids school-age, in school, it just seems that you are into it so much more you know, the whole parenting thing and a lot of what the parenting course covers isn't really directed to little toddlers kind of thing, you know.	I want to consciously parent and to find the right ways. My job of parenting is very important to me.	26
Not really. You know, some of their social problems, and things like that are more school-age. So they are probably getting a lot of good insight into the	I like to discuss specific issues and I solve particular problems through discussion.	27

course. They are not contributing as much, you know. They come out more with ideas than what is actually happening in their home, you know.		
Oh ya, really...the nicest feeling going to the class is finding out that other people have the same problems that you have and that other people, you know, you hear somebody say "I almost strangled my kid last night" and I know the feeling! And you can identify with that and it is...it is a real relief to know that other people feel that way too.	I feel real empathy and sharing with the people in the group. To know other people feel negatively toward their children takes pressure off me.	28
Gee, I don't know. That's a good question. Probably. Because I think you do find out your kids are normal. You know, I mean you know that anyway if you are out in the world a lot, ... ya you find out your kids aren't as bad as some I guess. Sure, yes...through the class you find out that your kids are not doing this to punish you, when they act up, it is just part of their development.	When I find out my children are the same as other children, which I have in the course, I don't feel the children are personally against me. That relieves pressure.	29
Sure, you know, all kids do that kind of thing...and all kids get in trouble some times...some more than others and all parents have the same feelings ... even though they appear to be on top of the world, that no everybody is perfect, a perfect parent as they appear to be to the outside world.	It is helpful to find out others are not perfect either and we share the imperfection.	30

That other people can lose their temper and can ... you know, all those things happen in all homes.	I feel less guilt when I hear of other parents' imperfections and that I am normal.	31
Oh, everything has been helpful: the information I received, the discussions I find that talking about a lot of things in the class and being heard and being understood means a lot because you can have these things happening in your home and talking about them clarifies them as you talk about it and it puts the problem into perspective like...	The class provides a lot of support and understanding. It is helpful to talk about problems with others who understand and do not criticize.	32
There was one problem that I did have that I, you know, I knew it was a serious problem, and talking about it in class -- it really was a serious problem, and so, you know, it made me feel really a lot better somehow to talk about it and to find out that I have support of some kind, with this problem, you know, with one of the children.	It took a lot of pressure off me to talk about problems with others in a supportive atmosphere.	33
Oh, ya, of course when you are talking about it at home it is more like you are dealing with it... you are too involved at home ... you know it is happening too close. But when you talk about it at class it is like you can almost laugh about it at the same time. Ya, that's right. Like here is my story and you tell your story but at home it is more like...it is very hard to talk about it without the feelings getting in the way somehow.	At home it is difficult to communicate and stay rational. Feelings are too close to the surface. Yet talking about it is a release of pressure. In the group it is okay to talk about problems.	34

Well, not really I guess. It is still your problem. You feelings are still there ... but to hear yourself talk about it helps you understand it better ... it feels good I guess to finally talk about it, I have never talked about it ... it is my son - the kind of temper he has - and how we have had to deal with his temper over the years, you know this kind of thing.	In the group it is easier to admit you have a problem and the group leaves the problem with you.	35
And just saying in the class how we had to fix his door so he couldn't get out ... I was just talking about a few things last week with him that have happened with him, ... you know, about how we had to deal with him and his temper and how he attacks us kind of thing. And it just sort of felt good to say what we had to do with him kind of thing; that we did put him in his room and lock him in there and fix his door so he couldn't get out for a place to put him when he was reacting, and not feel really really bad about having to do it, and I said it, it was almost like a necessary thing that we had to do. But at the time when you do it, you feel really rotten about it all. Ya, sure ... you know you feel bad about it all - not so much that you are a bad parent but because you are doing this because you have to do it anything -	Prior to the course there were some issues we were afraid to discuss. They stayed bottled up. Your own self esteem goes down then.	36
You just feel bad but you know when you can talk about it openly, it is almost like you validate yourself somehow, you know. And to	The group demonstrated good communication and provided support. The group was non-judgmental.	37

have people listen to you and understand it, really means a lot. You know, people were concerned, and that sort of thing. It really did help.		
Someone said that in a recent class - they wished they had started a long time ago. And I really have read books right from the start ... I really have made quite an effort.	I want to be conscious of my parenting and to do a good job.	38
You know I was terrified at the idea of parenting, because I didn't like the way I was brought up and because of conflicts that I had when I was growing up especially with my mother and that sort of thing - I was really quite afraid to have a daughter - and I thought maybe I would do alright with boys, but you know just because of my relationship with my mom I was really afraid to be a parent and I was reading tons of books before the kids were even born ... before the first one was born...	The way a person is raised influences parenting. I was searching for a way to parent that was different from the way I was parented. I was afraid I would not be a good parent.	39
Which is silly to read them. Now means so much more than before they were born because if you read them then, when you are pregnant, you just get scared, about whether you are going to be able to do the right thing and that sort of thing.	Ideas about parenting were best to learn once I had a child. When I read books before my child was born I just became more frightened. I would not do a good job. I want to do a good job.	40
Well, ya, but then there is the other part of you that comes out all the time too, you know, I certainly haven't been a perfect parent. I have yelled at my	I wish I could have been perfect, but I haven't been.	41

children and I don't spank them often, I don't believe in that kind of punishment the odd time that it seems appropriate ... and so they've gotten the odd little whack - one more than the other, you know.		
Ya, my son because he is a pesty little guy too and he has to be the centre of attention all the time. If I am doing things with my daughter, she is in Grade 2 and needs help with her homework and reading and things like that, well he's got to be in the middle and he is pesty. He can't stand me being there that close to her without him being in the middle; so I'll have to get him out of the way, you know, and he'll have to get that little whack every so often because he doesn't stop, you know. But not often. I certainly try to just politely ask him to behave.	I am very involved in my children's lives. I want to do the right thing.	42
Not really. (share the techniques with my husband) I brought home tapes from the library at the place and played them, and I do get him to read the odd thing here and there that I think is good but he is not the kind that likes to sit and read books like I do, especially on something like that ... a topic like that. Actually I would like to take him to one of the courses sometime. He'll listen but I don't get too great of a response, you know. But I do find that he tries to follow my example. He does and he is open to that.	I am responsible for the children really. We don't communicate very much about parenting. He will let me lead and model for him to follow.	43

Like especially since I've started taking the course, he will let me take the lead when something comes up. And he will support that. Ya, right...but he really doesn't want to sit for an hour today and discuss what I've learned, you know, and pick it apart.	He feels especially since the course that I probably know the way to handle an issue. I do feel support from him but I am responsible for parenting.	44
And I sort of think of it as my "thing" - the course -	Parenting is my job.	45
I might mention the odd thing that has happened but I don't go into great detail about everything that has happened in the course or talk about all the people and their problems or that sort of thing. Ya, I think that (confidentiality) was mentioned. I think it was. Well, I don't know. I don't think it has made any difference with me. I find if these people want to go and tell their neighbours a problem I've had, it doesn't bother me. I was the youngest. Two. A brother and he was only a year older than me. Ya, we just did that. We just took that (your birth order) on Tuesday. And I was the only one there that was the youngest. Ya, so we had to all write out the advantages and disadvantages of being in that position.	I'm not sure I trust the group to keep confidentiality.	46
Ya, it does. My husband and I are both the youngest in our families and I can see definite characteristics, you know, especially in relationship to how we are treated by our families, that sort of thing. Ya, sure, it will certainly make	The learning in the group helps me to understand my family including myself and my husband.	47

us more aware of not putting too much responsibility on the oldest. She takes it on herself. She does, she is just my second little mother, you know, she is telling her little brother, helping him along, and telling him what to do and jumping right in with his problems, you know. She has just already taken on that role. And with him, we will just have to try to take him seriously and give him lots of responsibility and not make him feel like the baby because he does play into that role - he really does. The little guy doesn't think it is necessary for him to do anything around here as far as chores, you know, he doesn't feel he is capable - he may be - I don't know, he just can't be bothered. Somebody else will do it for him. And he is very demanding...get me this, get me that, you know. And if you don't, if you say "Jason, get it yourself" it is just...he can end up screaming at you kind of thing.		
Not really, no. I mean I would love to be a perfect parent and to be a perfect person, perfect friend, perfect spouse, but, no - I don't thing so, I think all we can do is do our best from what I've learned.	I would like to do everything right but the course has said to be satisfied with our best.	48
And I think most of the people in that course are very consciencious mothers - you know what I mean - they are not people that just come from nowhere not knowing anything. They are all	Everyone in the course is working very hard to parent the right way.	49

people like myself who are probably, have probably, done some reading and are quite aware of right from wrong as far as parenting does. I think so, yes. They seem to be quite aware.		
There is some that they do a lot that I wouldn't. You know - ideas on how they treat their kids, I guess, some seem to be very hard on their kids. Their expectations which I don't know ... can be good for them in some ways but I think you have to go by the child too, how much you can lay on them, and how much you can expect from them. Like I like to keep things positive - I don't want to be harping at them and I don't want to be mad at them all the time, you know, my expectations aren't as high as some people have for their kids the same age. Ya, I think as far as even keeping a bedroom clean that's their bedroom and I have certain expectations, like the bed has to be made, and that sort of thing but I don't go crazy if there is a few toys on the floor or the closet is a mess.	Not everyone in the group does things the same way. Everyone shares the way they do things. I have certain beliefs when dealing with my children.	50
I think so. I think we both have good intentions for them. But it is a matter of skill and he is very skilled at his job. You know. But as far as parenting goes, I know he doesn't have the same knowledge and understanding, insight.	My husband shares my beliefs.	51
	Parenting is my job and I work to be skilled at it. My husband knows this.	52
Ya, right. Like the homework issue, I have tried to get him involved because	My husband is not very involved in the home. He depends on me to	53

he would like to have all the parenting my responsibility - not all parenting - but responsibility as to homework and nitpicky things, I guess, you know - and I tried to get him more involved like by saying "I'll do the reading if you'll do the math with her" because she needs help with both, and he is receptive to that idea and he does her baton practise with her every night and that sort of thing but for him to get around to doing it, it is not until I suggest it. He'll say "ya" or "That's a good idea" but it'll never get done unless I stand over them, it's time to do it kind of thing, and make time in the day for it. He hasn't organized that. He really does look to me to organize, you know, all of our weekend time, social life, everything, you know.	organize the family matters.	
Well, I think he definitely follows my lead in the home, you know, where the children are concerned and that sort of thing. But he is certainly supportive of anything.	The responsibility is mine, but I feel his support. He likes me being responsible in the home.	54
No. We did in Toronto (have extended family). It was really kind of hard because were were only down there a year and a half. Before that we were in Vancouver and it was a really hard year and a half. We were just getting adjusted to each other and that was both parents down there too. And ya, they have their input. I found with my mother, every time I	When the context changes so does the family.	55

was disciplining the kids and they were at a rough age when we moved down there, the little guy was 18 months and my daughter was 4, and so ... you know ... there was a lot of disciplining to be done and that sort of thing. Of course when the grandparents are around, that's when they really go "bananas" and try to impress everybody and get the attention.		
But I found that any time I tried to discipline them, my mother would jump in and try to make everything o.k. and start singing her songs and blah, blah, you know, everything ... which is her way of helping, I guess, but finally I had to tell her that she had to back-off when I am disciplining my kids because they won't take me seriously or they won't think it is valid if she jumps in every time I open my mouth to tell them to smarten up. You know, "they are not going to think I am going the right thing if you interfere that way." So...	Relationships with extended family can make parenting difficult.	56
Ya, exactly, I could feel that happening and how they were playing into that. And so that was a real conflict between my Mom and I. I really hurt her feelings, like I did it in as nice a way as I could, but she cried for a week.	My relationship with my mother carried over into my parenting. It's difficult to change relationships.	57
So, I mean ... it was really hard down there to get everybody. And the other grandmother devoured them, candy and love, buy them a toy every time she sees them	Each context requires adaptation and it's difficult. In one family there are many viewpoints and it is difficult to separate from them.	58

and you know, just ... go overboard that way. We had to try and stop that, as best as we could. Ya, we had a lot to deal with down there and having both of them phoning me all the time, everyday I would have them both phoning two and three times a day and I was feeling smothered, completely - totally smothered.		
And my mother-in-law is on her own and she had no other friends but us down there. And so we tried to include her as much as we could, like for family dinners, and also a lot of outings but she wanted to take over. She wanted me to not even be there, and just take-over with my family and with the kids and my husband. Yes ... so that was kind of hard too.	Each of us has a way of being and its not easy to change when the context changes.	59
Once she comes to visit (she is coming for a month this Christmas) I can sort of step aside and let her do it but when I was living down there, to have her in my house and doing it all the time, it really got to me a lot more.	I want to have control in my home and set our own way of being a family.	60
Yes, it is, ya ... you know in a way, I miss being down there, we miss them, and the kids miss their grandparents, you know, but in another way, it is nice to have our privacy. You know ... I find we can do what we want on weekends - we don't have to have them for dinner tomorrow, or we don't have to take her here and there and around today.	I want to separate from our families of origin but when we're near them we don't do it.	61

You know, not that ..., we intend very well for them both, but you know ... it did get to be a headache.		
My daughter has resisted it ... she has told me a few times that she doesn't like me going to this course because she doesn't like what I am learning because usually if I do go to tell, or try something new, I'll tell them "Now, in Mommy's parenting course they suggest this, and I would like to give this a try."	It is difficult to do things differently. My daughter wants me to do things the way I've always done them.	62
I don't just do it because they might then just think I am neglecting them or you know ... like all of a sudden, I am not doing what I usually do. So I thought they deserve an explanation.	I feel guilty if I'm unpredictable.	63
And I know ... she has come out with that a few times on different things but the one thing I can remember is interfering with their fights. The fighting like ... this is another thing that really came out ... through the parenting course ... through talking about ... it is how much my daughter plays the victim role with my son, and he is always teasing her and hounding her and she goes "MOM, MOM, HE'S DOING IT! MOM, MOM" and I would say "JASON, leave your sister alone" or I would pull him off. So finally after I started the course, one or two weeks into it, I said "From now on, you two are going to have to solve your own fights." Because a lot of it is for attention. You know, the reason they do	I feel I should be protecting my daughter.	64

this is for my attention and for my involvement ... they run up the stairs to brush their teeth and then they fight and scream and push each other because they both want to brush their teeth at the same time, and there's one sink, and now I just let them do it.		
You know, as Shirley says in the class, unless it is life-threatening, let them handle their own fights. And I got a lot of resistance from her because she was the victim. She was the one ... and I thought well, for her own sake, at home and in school, she has got to learn to fight her own battles. She has got to learn to take care of herself.	I'm trying to do what the leader said but I feel guilty. I can know what I should do but it feels uncomfortable, and she knows it.	65
But it is a little bit different, because he is such a little monster. I know how mean he can be, especially towards his sister. He can be a real tease, and you know.	My daughter needs my protection and our case is unique.	66
He just turned 5 and she is 7 (almost seven and a half). But I thought, well, I guess it is time that she started to look after herself instead of depending on me to solve it all for her.	The concept in the course made sense on a conscious level.	67
So I just backed-off completely and I got a lot of resistance the first couple of weeks ... she was coming crying to me saying "Mommy, you are not my Mommy any more" "You're not helping me any more and I don't like you going to that course" and she is sobbing,	I do what I am supposed to do but I get feelings of guilt when I'm doing it.	68

and I am feeling terrible and there is so many times ...		
and I mean it is so hard not to interfere ... because he is ... he is ... pushing her around and trying to be a pest. But she can go in her room and lock the door and he can't get in. Which is good - she can get away from him. But see, he is the kind of kid that needs somebody to play with all the time and so he waits for her to come home from school and sometimes that's the time she needs the space. You know, she doesn't want to play with him right away and whatever, but sometimes she does it just to bug him because she knows and this kid wants to play with her so bad and so she deliberately will make him mad but he has to deal with that too ... so it was really hard to back off and not help her out in some of those cases. It really was and she really resisted me not helping her out ... the way I usually do. And I wish I could remember some of the other things that have changed more with her - that she resisted.	Change is resisted from the other people and from within yourself. I felt really anxious and guilty that I didn't help her.	69
I know it is not anything to do with responsibility because she is very good that way. She always wants to help. Right. As I continue to say out of their fights as much as I can, it has really lessened. Especially that morning thing where I am getting them off to school and stuff. Ya, I just can't	The group has created family change and it is less negative in our home.	70

believe the change. They just can't be bothered fighting with each other. Ya. It has really worked as far as the attention. They still get into their little scraps but they're their problems - things that they would of anyway, yes it has really made a difference. In a way, I guess it could bring them closer together too.		
I think (I entered the course) probably for me ... for me, probably. Well, for the family too, it is hard to say.	The group is for me as a parent. I need encouragement.	71
I didn't really go into the course with specific things in mind. I think for me it was - I read about it and I thought it sounded good, a good way to put in a Tuesday morning and I've gotten a lot out of it.	I want to be productive and the course has helped me.	72
It is funny how I do get resistance from the kids though. There have been some other things that have come up and my daughter says "I don't want you going to that course anymore" "I don't want you going to that school." Oh, homework is another one. I was telling her that it was up to her ... I sort of made it a fun thing, I said "Now, Mommy and Daddy have already passed Grade 2; it is up to you to pass Grade 2. We can help you, we are here to help you but we are not going to sit you down every night and make sure that you learn what you need to learn - it is up to you - you have	I am changing from controlling to supporting but it is difficult.	73

to take that responsibility on to know," you know.

Then I used just some examples out of the course. Some stories that I had heard of kids that depends on the parents and they stop learning in school because they just thought that Mommy and Daddy would teach it all to them when they got home. That sort of thing. I brought it into the course somehow and that was another time that she really resisted it.

I want my daughter to know that the things I am doing different came from the course and not from me. I don't want her to blame me. 74

Verbatim Transcript	Formulated Meanings	Numbered Meanings
I thought the course was excellent and ... mostly because it helps me to ... um, I had been reading books about this before, several years before I had been reading, I had been wanting to take a course before but my schedule hasn't permitted it before then. When I first started reading this material, the Adlerian psychology and all this stuff about the things you can do, the practical things you can do to become a better parent and when I became familiar with Barbara Coloroso and all these new ideas,	I take the job of parenting very seriously.	1
My first impression was "Oh, I am doing it all wrong" - it was very overwhelming - there was so much and then I figured "I am too late." My oldest was six, four, and a baby, and I wished more than anything that I had come in contact with all this information and material years earlier.	I felt guilty when first exposed to parent education material because I hadn't been doing all those things.	2
If I had read that stuff when I only had the one, and was keen, really keen, I know that it would have dramatically changed the way that I already parented from early on. I felt cheated, I felt deprived that I had only just found this information out, I felt that it was not fair - I should have come across it earlier, it would have made a big	I want to have access to everything to help me be the best parent I can be.	3

difference, I am really sure of that.

And then I felt overwhelmed because it was so much, I had so much changing to do and so ... until I started applying it. And as I applied it, little by little, it worked. It worked. Always it worked. So then I became a little more at ease and a little more comfortable with it because it worked.

When I narrowed the focus and did one successful thing at a time, I could relax somewhat and not feel so much pressure. 4

But it took a great deal of mental effort. When your kids are really little, and it seems that, say you have three pre-schoolers at home, your life is run-run-run. It is run ragged. And it is a physical challenge. Once they start getting a little bit older and especially when one starts getting into school and the other one is getting up closer to kindergarten, whatever, the challenge becomes more mental; and I found that now with my oldest being almost 11 it is very mental. There is very little physical parenting involved now, compared to those early years. It is all mental and it is just as exhausting because you have to think.

Parenting takes a great deal of mental energy, which is stressful. 5

Now, I am busy getting dinner ready, and he comes in and tells me something, the kids will tell me something, and if my mind is on another problem or something I am doing, and I don't want to be disturbed and they are telling me things that they need done, I just stop and say, "Wait a

I need to maintain awareness in order to parent conscientiously. 6

minute, what he is telling me is very important, if I don't listen now I am going to miss it because he is not going to repeat it."		
And I learned skills from these books all the way along, that helped me; then when I finally did take the course, which was only last year, many times before I actually took the course, I was in the bathroom with those books, I was in the bathroom with my nose to the book "Now what do I do,", in the middle of a crisis, "I don't know how to handle this situation," so I closed my bedroom door, lock it, go to the bathroom door, lock it, look up 'fighting' or whatever the subject we were dealing with was, read about it, there I was told what to do, "okay," took a deep breath, went out and dealt with it so it was an actual package of tools to use. And I found it worked, it was very helpful, everything was very helpful.	I needed a parenting resource to turn to for resolution of issues.	7
The only thing is that times of personal ... not necessarily crisis ... but personal upheaval, where I am tired or I am dealing with problems with my husband, financial pressures, just parenting, has been like pressures, and I was at a low point. Like parenting went right out the window because I did not have that .... the mental health that it took to ... okay, just concentrate, calm down, he is in a power struggle, what does he really want, attention, the tools that I	If I don't have the necessary mental energy, because of other issues, then I don't parent the way I want and I feel disappointed in myself.	8

was given go because it took effort, too much effort; and so at low points when it took effort, then I would get feeling guilty and feeling failure, "I can't do it, it is all too much."		
And then I would reflect on this parenting jazz and I would think really it is just a band-aid solution for an entire society and needs to be re-educated. And I really believe that we, as yuppies, need to be totally re-educated and I have only learned that through the books and the parenting courses and books that we come as parents and we parent the way we were parented. I think the majority of us do. There is just a very few that have whatever it takes not to parent the way they were parented if it is in a negative sense because I have friends that swore all their life that they were never going to parent that way and somehow have done that. Where I swore all my life, from a little child, I swore I would never yell at my kids because my parents yelled so much, and when I am low, that is the first thing I do is yell. And the words that come out of my mouth are my mother's words. And I found that very discouraging.	It is very demanding to change and not parent as one was parented.	9
And then I think well, it's just ... the courses work, the book works, but, all the books work, but it is a band-aid for the overall problem that everyone is dealing with - not just me	Messages from our past interfere with what we want to practice as a parent.	10

but my neighbours and my friends and we've got too much in us from before, and now I realize from talking to my own mother about parenting, the way she observes me parenting, is she simply parented the best with what she had to deal with at that time too and, she sees the mistakes she made and I understand that, and I think in many ways I think it is unfair and unjust but that is life. This the way it is and people, who from my grandmother, the changes in society that people have had to make I see come all along. And I think ... I don't know what the solution is, if there is one. I think that somehow we should get this message, this psychology, this theory to more people it would be really helpful to society in general to change. Ya, almost beyond the parenting too ... it is ok. to feel the way you do, it is ok., because you are just a product of your parents.	Adlerian psychology is very encouraging and all society needs encouraging.	11
I think it means almost the whole acceptance from society that because these yuppies are trying so hard to be the right parents to have the kid lined up to Harvard before they [illegible] this push that's on... [illegible] parents never cared about stuff like that. Our parents, they didn't take this parenting nearly as seriously as I think we do. And I think in some ways it is good but in some ways it is proving to be detrimental because our children are feeling a push,	Society in general also has impact on my parenting and creates a pressure on me.	12

a pressure to perform, a pressure to succeed. We have got them in ten different lessons and all these things and so I think that needs to be looked at. Why are we doing this? Why are we trying to be superparents that I think it all has to do with society's view of parenting or where we are all at right now.		
And so at low point I think "Oh, it is too hard, I am going to chuck it," because it involves too much effort and it is really, there is so much more to it.	It is difficult to keep the pressure on yourself.	13
We need to look deep down in ourselves and find what we are really searching for where we are at, because I firmly believe that we cannot be the kind of parent you want to be, or you should be or could be, until you are the best person that you can be. And so that is a very individual thing. Everybody, first of all, you have to want to get rid of the garbage that you dumped in your garbage pile since childhood. We are all carrying them and it spills over into parenting... it spills over into our life, into our relationships, into our communication and so at low points, like I say, that comes out and it makes me discouraged.	Self acceptance, self evaluation and self reflection are necessary as all of these affect me as a parent and as a person relating to other people.	14
But then you get over that, and you are strong again, and then I go back. Taking the actual course was really helpful because you had peer support. More than anything I think it was peer support.	Through sharing with others I felt we all belonged to the group and supported each other.	15

Ya, the other ones telling their own story and you think, "ah, I am not so bad afterall." You know, I am doing ok. because I have been there and I am passed her experience. Hey, I have lived through that and now I can tell her, why don't you try this, or I did this ... the sharing of heartbreak, the sharing of frustration, the sharing of what works and what doesn't, the peer, to me, was invaluable.		
The instruction - the actual instruction - was again receiving a set of tools. Specific tools for specific problems and going home and while I attended the course, I was to go home and I was all gung-ho, "Oh, I am going to change the world," because I had already read everything, and so I took it more as reinforcement for what I sort of already knew, and was glad to learn new techniques, or new whatever.	The course content built on a foundation I already had from books.	16
But I remember I would go to this great class and have this great discussion on encouragement or something and I would go home and immediately be faced with a problem and it would go right over my head. My natural instincts reacted first, which was wrong - always - and I would say the wrong thing or blow-up and then I would go back and say, what is the matter with you? We just discussed that, and it went in and right out and I found that very discouraging too.	It was discouraging to hear something in the group and not be able to apply it at home.	17

So then I came back to it and at one point in the course they talked about that circle of change, or what do you call that? Process of change, and so we discussed that. I said, listen, I have this problem and I "reacted totally wrong; I reacted out of instinct and I blew it and everything went from bad to worse, and I am really discouraged. So that is when she brought out that process of change and said, "look, it is not so bad because you recognized, you are at this point because you recognized right away, next time maybe it will happen before you react."	There is a process of change and knowing that I'm not as hard on myself.	18
So that was encouraging again.	The group encouraged me to keep at it.	19
And not that it ... I don't know if it made me a much better parent, the actual course, in that if anything, I think, if anything has made me a better parent it was the course I took on encouragement and self understanding. Because it was the self that had to let-go and open up and confront before I had to deal with parenting issues because like I say the first instinct is to parent the way you were parented and I had a very negative, very ... everything ... very bad experience as a child and all my childhood memories are negative. They are all scary and miserable and so I feel like I have had a lot to overcome and so that ... self understanding for me to open up more areas in me, I	It's not the techniques that make you a better parent. Self understanding comes first then you are better able to reach your ideal.	20

was able to heal things, I was able to face things, I was able to forgive my parents and look at them differently, and I know that I have had to come to that point to be the parent that I want to be first and so I feel that I have grown eons and now things aren't ... every year it gets easier in some ways and I look back and yet I am not really using the skills unless I am confronted with a real problem.		
Something else I wanted to mention about my husband's involvement. He has been very, very supportive. He has not taken any of the courses, he hasn't read any of the books. I used to come to him in the beginning and say, "now look at this, this is what it says about this, and I would read a little bit to him." And he would, "uh, that sounds ... ya, okay."	My husband supports my efforts to be the best I can be at my job.	21
But he had so much faith in my judgement that when we came across a problem with one of the children, an issue, then it got to the point where he would just say ... I'd discusss it and say, "oh, I am having so much problem. The school called me again" ... whatever ... "what should we do about this?" And the first thing he would say is "what does the book say?" And I would go to the book, and I would say "Well, the book says to do this ..."	The responsibility to address child issues is mine.	22

So we would get the books out and discuss, as parents we would use the ideas from the books, we would use our intuition and our own, well ... "That's okay, but for our own child in this situation, let's modify it," or whatever, compromise.	The information was a basis for us to discuss issues and decide for ourselves.	23
We discussed that a little bit in the courses and I think my husband is quite unique in that way because most of the spouses took this almost as a threat to them and they became defensive in that you are all of a sudden taking a course, "Hey, we are doing it all wrong, we gotta do it this way, the books says we have to do this," and the husband's backup and says "Hey, what makes you the authority all of a sudden," and they become sort of defensive yet I didn't find that at all.	The information from the group could be resented by husbands not in the group.	24
My husband was very supportive. It could be that he was too lazy to read the books himself but I think more that he knew that I had hit on something that was right. Of course when our baby was first born, we lived by Spock, we sat up in the middle of the night and read Spock, we paced by Spock, and learned that wasn't the answer for the growing up things. That was okay for the typical infant things but, so ... he was very, very, supportive that way and even now, we ... if there is a problem that we really don't know how to handle and, or, we will get the books back out and say	My husband and I welcome outside information and he leaves it to me to gather it.	25

okay, "I think he needs more encouragement at this point, this is just for whatever,"		
and in the early years when I first started reading this stuff, I had all the vocabulary ... all the vocabulary was totally foreign to me. Especially the encouragement stuff. The actual "I like the way you did that". "Gee, that's nice; that's a good job," and the difference between praise and encouragement. And all this was foreign. A totally foreign language. Those words were not in my life at all. So I found that I had to tape them to my cupboard;	Learning something new is difficult as it has to become part of your life.	26
I still have them taped to my kitchen cupboard because I would say things that according to the books were not encouraging "Oh, that is good, but what about this", or, you know, "You could have done better." And so I would stop myself being aware of those things, I would stop myself, if they would come home with something that to them I could see that they wanted some feedback, I would quickly sneak to the cupboard and look and see "Oh, I really like the colors you chose on that" or "I like the way you did that."	When you are aware, you can change.	27
And the statement, immediately they responded immediately to what I was saying. So I knew that those were keys that opened doors that I wasn't able to do to open - I didn't have	When I try something new, their response encourages me.	28

the tools with my background and my knowledge, so I would tell these things to my husband too.		
I would tell him the difference between praise and encouragement because he was brought up praised: "Oh, you have been a good boy, you have done a good job," you know, and knowing the background behind that I see that it is really not encouraging. Praise, I do believe is discouraging, in	A foundation is necessary as a rationale for the specifics.	29
some ways and so ... he now uses the lingo and the language and he tells my son to ... like they got their report cards today and right away, my son, who is older, wanted to know what his sister got and they were comparing, they are very competitive, they were comparing marks and my husband told my son to "Now, don't make her feel bad; encourage her," and now he is using that; spilling over into the kids. We are teaching the kids to encourage each other and so it has done good things.	My husband and I are in this together and he is also open to change.	30
Ya, but (good communication) that took a lot of work. I am the oldest of five. He is the second oldest of five.	We now have good communication.	31
No, in fact, (my extended family) they all listened to what I had to say. They all had changed their ... from my parents, like my sisters, I would say to them, "Guess what I learned", or "Try this" and so they would go and try it, and they'd get the books too. I didn't have any opposition. I	My whole family is open to change and we support change in each other.	32

think they look to me as a leader and I know that they all sort of admire and put me on a pedestal and so, "if it is working for her, it must be good."

I think (the degree of conflict) that would have a lot to do with the relationships because if there is insecurity there, or any harbouring, things that people are harbouring, then they will feel threatened by this (course) whatever, and this isn't the case in my family - we are very close - and so what ever one person does, it is just wonderful to all of us. We will support and uphold through anything.

Relationship issues affect parenting. If there is support a person can change. 33

We all lived in hell. My father was an alcoholic and he was very destructive, and destructively critized us. He always told us we were no good, we were stupid, we were dumb, we were ugly, it would be no good, there was a lot of physical violence ... not to us but in the home ... there was a lot of violence ... a lot ... all the time ... and we all now are very close and we know it is because of what we went through. We all pulled together to survive. Well, it was each man for himself at home. At the time, no, this didn't happening until all of us left. Until the family broke up actually. And because it was too chaotic, too horrifying, we couldn't confide in each other, we were living in fear all the time he had breakdowns he tried to

Past issues affect what we do as an adult. I learned to cooperate and support. 34

commit suicide, many, many times, it was always horrible. We didn't talk. We didn't communicate but it wasn't until after, as part of the healing process, that we drew together. And we all look at it now and honestly say that we are glad, that ... because we wouldn't be the people that we are today, if we hadn't gone through that.		
And that (encouragement and self understanding course) has made the biggest impact in my life. Ya, it was. I was ready for some things. I was very ... I mean I had been to psychiatrists, I had been to psychologists, trying to deal with the ghosts and the horrors and the hurts and it ... I think that is just the vehicle that did it at that time.	A person must be ready and searching for change in order to take advantages of an opportunity.	35
Ya, (group was supportive) because it was small and it was intimate, and it was threatening in a way because you revealed ... you know ... they did this early recollection which opened up a Pandora's Box for me. I was the only one in the group that couldn't give an early recollection. I couldn't! It was like I can't open it up. So I did it at home on my own after hearing everybody else's stories. After he wrote them all down on the board and he analyzed them and he said, you are the way you are because of that and everybody's freaking out - it's like "Wow!", he knew the right thing to say, just based on those memories."	Group support is essential to help a person risk.	36

And I thought, "Oh, don't ask me because I can't handle it." I couldn't handle it in a group, and that was okay; they didn't push me. And I knew, I felt very safe in the group and could say things and I learned things about myself, especially when we went in the eldest together, the youngest, the middle and we all talked about what it was like to be the eldest,		
and I got insights into why I was the way I am, you know, and things like that, you know, but I couldn't break down in front of the group. There was too much and I kind of did it at home on my own. I didn't sleep for three nights. All the ghosts came out and I confronted them all and from then on, it changed me. Ya, I met him (the instructor) one time after and I told him, but I don't think he would ever realize the impact.	Insights are important for change.	37
Ya, and he wouldn't know me anyway, and I told several other people, since, in fact Gloria is a very close friend of mine and she is the one I told, I said "You need to go here." She has a lot of things to work out too. And it just ... it was such a really safe place to get those things out.	I support my friends in their need to address past issues.	38
And I don't think there is anybody that can do it without facing ... you know getting out the barriers, the blocks.	Before change, you need to address the issues that will block change.	39

And then they just take a spiral down hill into self destructive patterns. Drinking, smoking, overeating, beating their kids, whatever, you see it all the time, you see it in Safeway, you see the frustrated mothers and you know ... I have been there, I know, you know, they have got anger directed in toward them and you know that there is something blocking that needs dealing with. It might not be a big deal. It may be as simple as not having forgiven somebody or, you know. Ya, because otherwise you take out your frustrations on your kids. You do - it is a fact of life. Very few people are strong enough not to - you know, you do. You are tired, you are frustrated, life is rough, this life is not easy, it never has been and we're got so many pressures - financial and family and health and everybody struggles, and I think that the majority of people short change their kids first or their spouses. Some people are wonderful ... I have friends that absolutely worship their children, but they take out their frustration, their hurt, all the garbage on their spouses and I think, well, unequivocally that is the worst thing you can do, and that is the worst thing for the children,	The blocks need to be removed or a person is frustrated and angry and cannot parent effectively.	40
because I firmly believe that the best thing you can give your children is a healthy role model of a healthy relationship -	My husband and I are united in our support of each other.	41

husband and wife - be a loving couple and then, and I truly remind myself when I get down, what my husband and I are doing is so good and so right that it won't matter the mistakes we make in parenting, because they will see that the love, they will see the trying, you know, if I blow it "OK., you, that's it, I've had it, you're not..." and say something stupid and I know I am not going to be able to follow through on that. They know. And when Dad blows up and loses it, he always goes, we go, and apology to them which I think that in itself is healing and I really think they are very forgiving and if they are shown, they won't harbour the negative.

I used to worry so much that all my kids are going to remember what a witch I am or what a horrible person I am what a terrible mother I am and they are going to grow up with all those horrible memories like I had, and honestly, when he said "Think of good memories" I did not ... I had one good childhood memory, one and that was it. The rest was a horror show and I thought my kids are going to be the same way. And I used to be so worried about just ordinary, every day, things.

Our past life affects our present. The child in us remains in the present family. 42

If I reacted badly or if I thought it was badly, I thought, oh no, I have imprinted another bad memory on them. So I was wracked with terrible guilt about

The support of my husband as well as the group helped me to get over feeling guilty. 43

that, but I know now that is not true. I know our relationship will overcome because I never had a role model ... not anywhere near a normal family with loving and giving so I feel, I am convinced that whatever mistakes I make, they won't be that bad.		
Ya, I was familiar, quite familiar, with the whole ...	There is a wholeness to understand.	44
although I would not hesitate to take the course over and over again just for reenforcement. I felt during that time, that this is something you need to take once a year. Just to ... because your kids are at different stages all the time and it reminds you of ... to try ... okay ... you get lazy and you forget the things you have learned and read, but by taking the course, reminds you, "try this." "Oh, ya, ok." and you try it and it always works. It always does. So that is what is so encouraging.	The course support motivates you to keep trying.	45
Sometimes not right away but almost, almost, exactly, just in the phrasing in the way they suggest you do things, or the time out that the course gives you to stand back and look at things in a different perspective.	The course gives a perspective, a way of viewing issues for resolution.	46
There is something I am trying to think of that really, it was an incident that happened with one of the kids. We learned it that very morning that I reacted the wrong way	It takes a lot of conscious effort and practice to change. It is difficult and time consuming.	47

totally and I was so mad at myself for blowing it with my son, and I went out jogging, and I jogged around and around and around the block trying to get this anger and frustration out, and when I started to calm down, then I realized, "Oh ya, right there in the class this morning that is what they talked about" and I just for the life of me cannot remember what that principle was but it was, then I rehearsed it and I had to go through it in my mind and even Shirley said there are times when it doesn't come automatic. I still have to rehearse what I am going to say to that child or even to my husband about this certain thing. And so I rehearsed it and rehearsed it until I had it word perfect, all this time jogging around the block, and finally I went in,		
I think it was something like "It makes me really angry when ...", that's what it was, yes, the "I" thing, yes, an I message, that was it, so in the beginning in one of the evaluations either that one or the one at the beginning of the course, I can't remember, when they said "What do you want out of this?", I knew I wanted tools. I wanted a specific set of tools to take with me and take home and put to use. And that is exactly what I got.	I knew what I wanted when I began the course, and got that.	48
Whereas I could tell people that were in there probably right off the street this	First you need a foundation and to understand the underlying	49

was their first experience, we looked at the whole course totally different and I could see that. So, I felt much further ahead that way, I knew, and so I could take the tools home and apply, and they still had all the background to absorb, and get through, and, you know what I mean?	philosophy. Then you can apply the techniques.	
And I could tell ... one thing Shirley said that they found that initially when they first started holding these courses that they had a high drop out rate and I could see that because when you first come upon it, there is so much you have to change, in order to implement all this stuff. And so, I can see that as being discouraging, and in fact I found that out on my own and so I,	There is such a lot to learn that it can be overwhelming to implement by yourself.	50
It was the peer support that kept everybody together or how they changed.	The peer support kept me encouraged to keep trying.	51
Ya, and maybe taking it a lot slower and I think that is what gradually evolved, I am not sure, but I, let's not take 15 weeks worth of stuff and cover the whole book, let's just do encouragement for 10 weeks because that alone ... because personally that alone was like a foreign language. Everything about encouragement was new and foreign and had to be learned and to start applying all those other things, I thought "oh, wait."	Each concept in the course takes a long time to be able to apply.	52

I think it is a good thing (there were no men). Ya, just because, you know, sometimes, and it always comes out that women get a chance to air their frustrations with the husbands, too, but they wouldn't in a group. It might be a whole different thing, and the focus would be entirely different in a spousal situation. But as many times as we would comment on "Oh, I could use that principle on my husband," do you know what I mean, and then we all laugh because we all know what they mean, we are all frustrated by the socks being ... it was okay, and it is just reassuring individually to know that you are doing okay.	As a group of only women, we could relate to each other and understand each other. We were connected to each other as women.	53
Not only ok., "Hey, I am doing really good" but I can see where these other people are or, you know, that experience was helpful that way.	The group contained people at all different points in dealing with their families and we could gain encouragement from each other.	54
Ya, right, and I didn't all of a sudden come home with all this new stuff ... well, I did but it took, I had to weed it out ... I had to go slow because ... it was overwhelming.	I had to be very patient with my family and myself or I would become overwhelmed by all the areas addressed.	55

APPENDIX B

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PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

Lesson 1.	Program Orientation	2 hours
Lesson 2.	Encouragement (Adlerian)	2 hours
Lesson 3.	Understanding Your Child (Maslow)	2 hours
Lesson 4.	Goals of Misbehaviour (Adlerian/Dreikurs)	2 hours
Lesson 5.	Communication Skills-Listening (Gordon)	2 hours
Lesson 6.	Communication Skills - I-Messages/No-Lose Method/Problem-Solving (Gordon)	2 hours
Lesson 7.	Effective Discipline-Consequences (Dreikurs/Adlerian)	2 hours
Lesson 8.	Family Constellation and Family Cooperation (Adlerian and others)	2 hours
Lesson 9.	Parents as People (Self-Understanding) (Adlerian)	2 hours
Lesson 10.	Child Development (Piaget and others)	2 hours

1. In this lesson group members introduce themselves and the structure for each week is discussed. Lesson One also introduces "empathy" "private logic" "acceptance" and "social interest" through a group activity.

2 Encouragement is the process of "putting courage into" another, and parents discuss how this can apply to their children. Parents are assisted to focus on the effort of children (eg. "You're working hard on that") while de-emphasizing the product. Encouragement goes beyond praise, according to this view, and includes showing confidence in children and building a positive relationship, as well as acknowledging what children do.

3. Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" is the focus for this lesson and parents discuss how to meet their children's social/emotional needs to enhance positive growth and development. There is one group activity that assists parents to change their perception of traits that children may have (eg. stubborn becomes persistent).

4. The idea that behaviour is goal-directed and meaningful is discussed with participants. The four goals of misbehaviour, attention, power, revenge and inadequacy are presented through a group activity, and parents are shown the relationship between the goal of the behaviour, the parents' feelings, and the child's private logic. The process of reducing misbehaviour then is the process of changing the child's faulty logic.

5. The process of "reflective" or "active" listening is taught to parents in a step-by-step sequence. Parents practise each step during the evening. This process requires that parents put aside their "parent" messages (from their history) and listen to what their child means by a particular statement.

6. Parents are taught, and discuss, how to take ownership of feelings and express them to children. Children therefore are not blamed for a parental feeling (eg. "You make me made" becomes, "I feel very angry"). It is emphasized that this "I message" is intended to communicate to children how the parent feels and not to manipulate them into doing what the parent wants. "I messages" therefore are often the beginning of negotiation. In this lesson parents also are assisted to become more aware of "problem ownership," responsibility, and problem-solving in the family.

7. Discipline techniques of "natural" and "logical" consequences are discussed and parents become aware of differences between consequences and punishment. The main difference between the two, as discussed by participants in groups, is that consequences teaches responsibility and internal control, while punishment teaches external control.

8. Birth order, as it affects perception and behaviour is discussed in this lesson, through parents examining the position they grew up in, in their family of origin. Parents then apply the learnings to their present families and look at ways to enhance positive belonging for all children. Ways to enhance cooperation are also discussed.

9. The stresses of parents themselves are examined and discussed in this lesson, and participants discover ways they can reduce their own stress. In addition, parents identify their "top card" (eg. superiority, control, pleasing or comfort) through a group activity and discuss the implications for parenting.

10. Children's physical, intellectual, social and emotional development is taught to parents and participants then discuss how this knowledge applies to their children. As this is the final lesson, parents are encouraged to examine how the course concepts fit together.

Note: After the second lesson, there is time in each lesson for discussion of specific problems in parenting. The group uses a problem-solving format so that all participants may have input into possible solutions, while it is the participant who is most affected by the particular problem who chooses the solution that will fit for her.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

November 20, 1987

This is to give permission to Joan Monson to audiotape an interview with me. This tape is for research purposes only and will be destroyed within six months of the date. Any transcripts made from this tape will be anonymous.

Signed: ______________________________

Address: ______________________________

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Telephone: ________________

Date: ________________